



VLADIMIR NABOKOV

The Original of Laura

(Dying Is Fun)

Vladimir Nabokov

Edited by Dmitri Nabokov

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efface

expunge

erase

delete

rub out

~~scribble out~~

wipe out

obliterate

Contents

Cover

Title Page

Copyright

Introduction

Acknowledgments

A Note on the Text

The Original of Laura

A Note About the Author

Other Books by This Author

Introduction

BY DMITRI NABOKOV

As a tepid spring settled on lakeside Switzerland in 1977, I was called from abroad to my father's bedside in a Lausanne clinic. During recovery from what is considered a banal operation, he had apparently been infected with a hospital bacillus that severely lessened his resistance. Such obvious signals of deterioration as dramatically reduced sodium and potassium levels had been totally ignored. It was high time to intervene if he was to be kept alive.

Transfer to the Vaud Cantonal University Hospital was immediately arranged, and a long and harrowing search for the noisome germ began.

My father had fallen on a hillside in Davos while pursuing his beloved pastime of entomology, and had gotten stuck in an awkward position on the steep slope as cabin-carloads of tourists responded with guffaws, misinterpreting as a holiday prank the cries for help and waves of a butterfly net. Officialdom can be ruthless; he was subsequently reprimanded by the hotel staff for stumbling back into the lobby, supported by two bellhops, with his shorts in disarray.

There may have been no connection, but this incident in 1975 seemed to set off a period of illness, which never quite receded until those dreadful days in Lausanne. There were several tentative forays to his former life at the *hôtel* Palace in Montreux, the majestic recollection of which floats forth as I read, in some asinine electronic biography, that the success of *Lolita* "did not go to Nabokov's head, and he continued to live in a *shabby Swiss hotel*." (Italics mine.)

Nabokov did begin to lose his own physical majesty. His six-foot frame seemed to stoop a little, his steps on our lakeside

promenades became short and insecure.

But he did not cease to write. He was working on a novel that he had begun in 1975—that same crucial year: an embryonic masterpiece whose pockets of genius were beginning to pupate here and there on his ever-present index cards. He very seldom spoke about the details of what he was writing, but, perhaps because he felt that the opportunities of revealing them were numbered, he began to recount certain details to my mother and to me. Our after-dinner chats grew shorter and more fitful, and he would withdraw into his room as if in a hurry to complete his work.

Soon came the final ride to the Hôpital Nestlé. Father felt worse. The tests continued; a succession of doctors rubbed their chins as their bedside manner edged toward the graveside. Finally the draft from a window left open by a sneezing young nurse contributed to a terminal cold. My mother and I sat near him as, choking on the food I was urging him to consume, he succumbed, in three convulsive gasps, to congestive bronchitis.

Little was said about the exact causes of his malady. The death of the great man seemed to be veiled in embarrassed silence. Some years later, when, for biographical purposes, I wanted to pin things down, all access to the details of his death would remain obscure.

Only during the final stages of his life did I learn about certain confidential family matters. Among them were his express instructions that the manuscript of *The Original of Laura* be destroyed if he were to die without completing it. Individuals of limited imagination, intent on adding their suppositions to the maelstrom of hypotheses that has engulfed the unfinished work, have ridiculed the notion that a doomed artist might decide to destroy a work of his, whatever the reason, rather than allow it to outlive him.

An author may be seriously, even terminally ill and yet continue his desperate sprint against Fate to the last finish line, losing despite his intent to win. He may be thwarted by a chance occurrence or by the intervention of others, as was Nabokov many years earlier, on the way to the incinerator, when his wife snatched a draft of *Lolita* from his grasp.

My father's recollection and mine differed regarding the color of the impressive object that I, a child of almost six, distinguished with disbelief amid the puzzle-like jumble of buildings in the seaside town of Saint-Nazaire. It was the immense funnel of the *Champlain*, which was waiting to transport us to New York. I recall its being light yellow, while Father, in the concluding lines of *Speak, Memory*, says that it was white.

I shall stick to my image, no matter what researchers ferret from historical records of the French Line's liveries of the period. I am equally sure of the colors I saw in my final onboard dream as we approached America: the varying shades of depressing gray that colored my dream vision of a shabby, low-lying New York, instead of the exciting skyscrapers that my parents had been promising. Upon disembarking, we also saw two differing visions of America: a small flask of Cognac vanished from our baggage during the customs inspection; on the other hand, when my father (or was it my mother? memory sometimes conflates the two) attempted to pay the cabbie who took us to our destination with the entire contents of his wallet—a hundred-dollar bill of a currency that was new to us—the honest driver immediately refused the bill with a comprehending smile.

In the years that had preceded our departure from Europe, I had learned little, in a specific sense, of what my father “did.” Even the term “writer” meant little to me. Only in the chance vignette that he might recount as a bedtime story might I retrospectively recognize the foretaste of a work that was in progress. The idea of a “book” was embodied by the many tomes bound in red leather that I would admire on the top shelves of the studies of my parents' friends. To me, they were “appetizing,” as we would say in Russian. But my first “reading” was listening to my mother recite Father's Russian translation of *Alice in Wonderland*.

We traveled to the sunny beaches of the Riviera, and thus finally embarked for New York. There, after my first day at the now-defunct Walt Whitman School, I announced to my mother that I had learned English. I really learned English much more gradually, and it became my favorite and most flexible means of expression. I shall, however, always take pride in having been the only child in the world to have studied elementary Russian, with textbooks and all, under Vladimir Nabokov.

My father was in the midst of a transition of his own. Having grown up as a “perfectly normal trilingual child,” he nonetheless found it profoundly challenging to abandon his “rich, untrammelled Russian” for a new language, not the domestic English he had shared with his Anglophone father, but an instrument as expressive, docile, and poetic as the mother tongue he had so thoroughly mastered. *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, his first English-language novel, cost him infinite doubt and suffering as he relinquished his beloved Russian—the “Softest of Tongues,” as he entitled an English poem that appeared later (in 1947) in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Meanwhile, during the transition to a new tongue and on the verge of our move to America, he had written his last significant freestanding prose work in Russian (in other words, neither a portion of a work in progress nor a Russian version of an existing one). This was *Volshebnik (The Enchanter)*, in a sense a precursor of *Lolita*. He thought he had destroyed or lost this small manuscript and that its creative essence had been consumed by *Lolita*. He recalled having read it to group of friends one Paris night, blue-papered against the threat of Nazi bombs. When, eventually, it did turn up again, he examined it with his wife, and they decided, in 1959, that it would make artistic sense if it were “done into English by the Nabokovs” and published.

That was not accomplished until a decade after his death, and the publication of *Lolita* itself preceded that of its forebear. Several American publishers, fearing the repercussions of the delicate subject matter of *Lolita*, had abstained. Convinced that it would remain forever a victim of incomprehension, Nabokov had resolved to destroy the draft, and it was only the intervention of Véra Nabokov that, on two occasions, kept it from going up in smoke in our Ithaca incinerator.

Eventually, unaware of the publisher’s dubious reputation, Nabokov consented to have an agent place it with Girodias’s Olympia Press. And it was the eulogy of Graham Greene that propelled *Lolita* far beyond the trashy tropics of Cancer and Capricorn, inherited by Girodias from his father at Obelisk, and along with pornier Olympia stablemates, on its way to becoming what some have acclaimed as one of the best books ever written.

The highways and motels of 1940s America are immortalized in this proto-road novel, and countless names and places live on in Nabokov’s puns and anagrams. In 1961 the Nabokovs would

take up residence at the Montreux Palace and there, on one of their first evenings, a well-meaning maid would empty forever a butterfly-adorned gift wastebasket of its contents: a thick batch of U.S. road maps on which my father had meticulously marked the roads and towns that he and my mother had traversed. Chance comments of his were recorded there, as well as names of butterflies and their habitats. How sad, especially now when every such detail is being researched by scholars on several continents. How sad, too, that a first edition of *Lolita*, lovingly inscribed to me, was purloined from a New York cellar and, on its way to the digs of a Cornell graduate student, sold for two dollars.

The theme of book burning would pursue us. Invited to lecture at Harvard on *Don Quixote*, Nabokov, while recognizing certain merits of Cervantes, criticized the book as “crude” and “cruel.” The expression “torn apart,” applied years later to Nabokov’s evaluation, was further garbled by half-literate journalists until one perceived the image of a caricature Nabokov holding up a blazing volume before his class, accompanied by all the appropriate de rigueur moralizing.

And so, at last, we come to *Laura*, and again to thoughts of fire. During the last months of his life in the Lausanne hospital, Nabokov was working feverishly on the book, impervious to hoaxes from the insensitive, quizzes from the well-meaning, conjectures from the curious in the outside world, and to his own suffering. Among those were incessant inflammations under and around his toenails. At times, he felt almost as if he would rather be rid of them altogether than undergo tentative pedicures from the nurses, and the compulsion to correct them and seek relief by painfully digging at the digits himself. We shall recognize, in *Laura*, some echoes of these torments.

He looked at the sunny outdoors and softly exclaimed that a certain butterfly was already on the wing. But there were to be no more rambles on the hillside meadows, net in hand, book working in his mind. The book worked on, but in the claustrophobic microcosm of a hospital room, and Nabokov began to fear that his inspiration and his concentration would not win the race against his failing health. He then had a very serious conversation with his wife, in which he impressed upon her that if *Laura* remained unfinished at his death, it was to be burned.

The lesser minds among the hordes of letter writers that were to descend upon me would affirm that if an artist wishes to destroy a work of his that he has deemed imperfect or incomplete, he should logically proceed to do so neatly and providently ahead of time. These sages forget, though, that Nabokov did *not* desire to burn *The Original of Laura* willy-nilly, but to live on for the last few card lengths needed to finish at least a complete draft. It was also theorized that Franz Kafka had deliberately charged Max Brod with the destruction of the reprinted *Metamorphosis* and other masterpieces published and unpublished, including *The Castle* and *The Trial*, knowing full well that Brod could never bring himself to carry out the task (a rather naive stratagem for a brave and lucid mind like Kafka's), and that Nabokov had exercised similar reasoning when he assigned *Laura's* annihilation to my mother, who was an impeccably courageous and trustworthy emissary. Her failure to perform was rooted in procrastination—procrastination due to age, weakness, and immeasurable love.

For my part, when the task passed to me, I did a great deal of thinking. I have said and written more than once that, to me, my parents, in a sense, had never died but lived on, looking over my shoulder in a kind of virtual limbo, available to offer a thought or counsel to assist me with a vital decision, whether a crucial mot juste or a more mundane concern. I did not need to borrow my “*ton bon*” (thus deliberately garbled) from the titles of fashionable morons but had it from the source. If it pleases an adventurous commentator to liken the case to mystical phenomena, so be it. I decided at this juncture that, in putative retrospect, Nabokov would not have wanted me to become his Person from Porlock or allow little Juanita Dark—for that was the name of an early Lolita, destined for cremation—to burn like a latter-day Jeanne d’Arc.

On Father's ever shorter and less frequent visits home we tried bravely to keep up our chatty dinnertime conversation, but the otherworldly world of *Laura* would not be mentioned. By that time I and, I think, my mother knew, in every sense, how things would go.

Some time passed before I could bring myself to open Father's index-card box. I needed to traverse a stifling barrier of pain before touching the cards he had lovingly arranged and shuffled.

After several tries, during a hospital stay of my own, I first read what, despite its incompleteness, was unprecedented in structure and style, written in a new “softest of tongues” that English had become for Nabokov. I attacked the task of ordering and preparing, and then dictating, a preliminary transcript to my faithful secretary Cristiane Galliker. *Laura* lived on in a penumbra, emerging only occasionally for my perusal and the bits of editing I dared perform. Very gradually I became accustomed to this disturbing specter that seemed to be living a simultaneous twin life of its own in the stillness of a strongbox and the meanders of my mind. I could no longer even think of burning *Laura*, and my urge was to let it peek for an occasional instant from its gloom. Hence my minimal mentions of the work, which I sensed my father would not disapprove, and which, together with a few approximate leaks and suppositions from others, led to the fragmentary notions of *Laura* now flaunted by a press ever eager for the tasty scoop. Nor, as I have said, do I think that my father or my father’s shade would have opposed the release of *Laura* once *Laura* had survived the hum of time this long. A survival to which I may have contributed, motivated not by playfulness or calculation, but by an otherforce I could not resist. Should I be damned or thanked?

But why, Mr. Nabokov, why did you *really* decide to publish *Laura*?

Well, I am a nice guy, and, having noticed that people the world over find themselves on a first-name basis with me as they empathize with “Dmitri’s dilemma,” I felt it would be kind to alleviate their sufferings.

Acknowledgments

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Professor Gennady Barabtarlo

Professor Brian Boyd

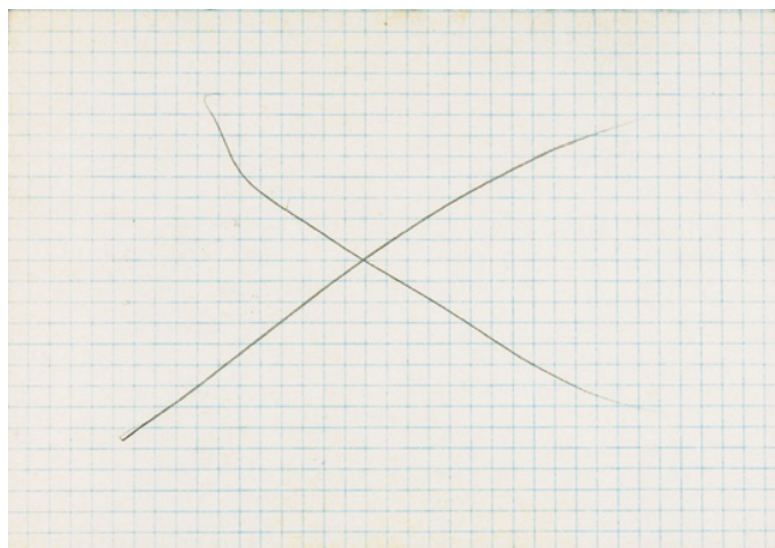
Ariane Csonka Comstock

Aleksei Konovalov

Professor Stanislav Shvabrin

Ron Rosenbaum, who could not have set off a better publicity campaign had it been planned (it was not).

To all the worldwide contributors of opinion, comment, and advice, of whatever its stripe, who imagined that their views, sometimes deftly expressed, might somehow change mine.



A Note on the Text

The typeset text of *The Original of Laura* preserves Vladimir Nabokov's original markings from the handwritten cards. Nonstandard spellings (i.e., "bycycle") and punctuation have been retained, and accents have not been added to French words where they do not appear on the cards. Some additional material is included within brackets or as footnotes for clarity.

In the Knopf hardcover edition, the photos of the cards that accompany the text are perforated and can be removed and rearranged, as the author likely did when he was writing the novel.

The Original of Laura

Ch. One

Her husband, she answered, was a writer, too—at least, after a fashion. Fat men beat their wives, it is said, and he certainly looked fierce, when he caught her riffling ~~him~~ through his papers; He pretended to slam down a marble paperweight and crush this weak little hand (displaying the little hand in febrile motion). Actually she was searching for ~~an~~ silly business letter, ~~and~~ not ^{in the least} trying to decipher his mysterious

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

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manuscript. Oh no, it was not a ^{work of fiction} ~~work~~ (2)
^{which} ~~one~~ dashes off, you know, to make
money; it was a mad neurologist's
~~manicured~~ testament, a
kind of Poisonous Opus as in that film.
It had cost him, ~~the price of~~
~~the price of~~ and would still
cost him, years of toil, but ^{the} ~~the~~
~~the~~ ^{thing} was of course, an absolute
secret. If she mentioned it at all, she
added, it ~~was~~ because ~~she was drunk~~.
She wished to be taken home or preferably
to some cool quiet place with a clean bed
and room service. She wore a strapless gown

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

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(3)

and slippers of black velvet. Her bare insteps were as white as her young shoulders. The party seemed to have degenerated into a lot of sober eyes staring at her with nasty compassion from every corner, every cushion and ashtray, and even from the hills of the ~~spring~~ ~~night~~ ~~framed~~ in the open french window. Mrs. Carr, her hostess, repeated what a pity it was that Philip could not come or rather that Flora could not have induced

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him to come! I'll drug him ~~and~~ next time said Flora, (4)
~~in the flat~~ rummaging all around
her seat for her small formless vanity
bag, a blind black puppy. Here it is,
cried an anonymous girl, squatting
quickly.
Mrs Carr's nephew, Anthony Carr,
and his wife Winny, ^{one of those} ~~mere~~ ~~easygoing~~
~~easygoing~~ easygoing, over-generous
couples that positively ^{any friend} ~~crave~~ to
lend their flat to a friend, when
they and their ~~two~~ dog do not happen

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

4

him to come! I'll drug him next time said Flora, rummaging all around her seat for her small formless vanity bag, a blind black puppy. Here it is, cried an anonymous girl, squatting quickly.

Mrs Carr's nephew, Anthony Carr, and his wife Winny, were one of those easygoing, over-generous couples that positively crave to lend their flat to a friend, any friend, when they and their dog do not happen

(5)

to need it. Flora spotted at once ~~the~~ alien creams in the bathroom and the open can of Fido's Feast next to the ~~naked~~ cheese in the cluttered fridge. A brief set of instructions ~~(concerning)~~ (pertaining to the superintendent and the charwoman) ended on: "Ring up my aunt Emily Carr," which evidently had be[en] already done to lamentation in Heaven and laughter in Hell. The double bed was made but was unfresh inside. With comic fastidiousness Flora spread

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

5

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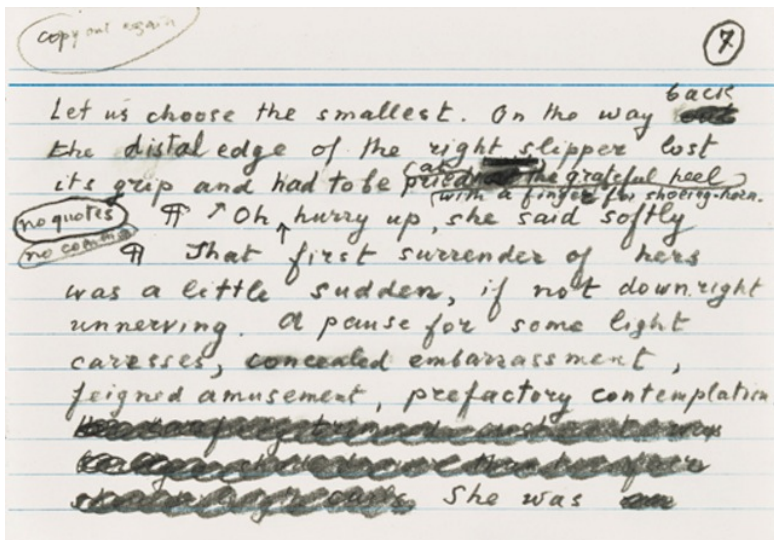
(6)

her furcoat over it ~~before undressing~~
 before undressing and lying down.
 Where was the damned valise
 that ^{had been} brought up earlier? ~~Where was the damned valise~~
 In the vestibule closet. Had everything
 to be shaken out before the pair
 of morocco slippers could be located
 foetally folded in their zippered
 pouch? Hiding under the
 shaving kit. All the towels in the
 bathroom, whether pink or green, were
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Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Let us choose the smallest. On the way back the distal edge of the right slipper lost its grip and had to be pried at the grateful heel with a finger for shoeing-horn.

Oh hurry up, she said softly[.]

That first surrender of hers was a little sudden, if not downright unnerving. A pause for some light caresses, concealed embarrassment, feigned amusement, prefatory contemplation[.] She was

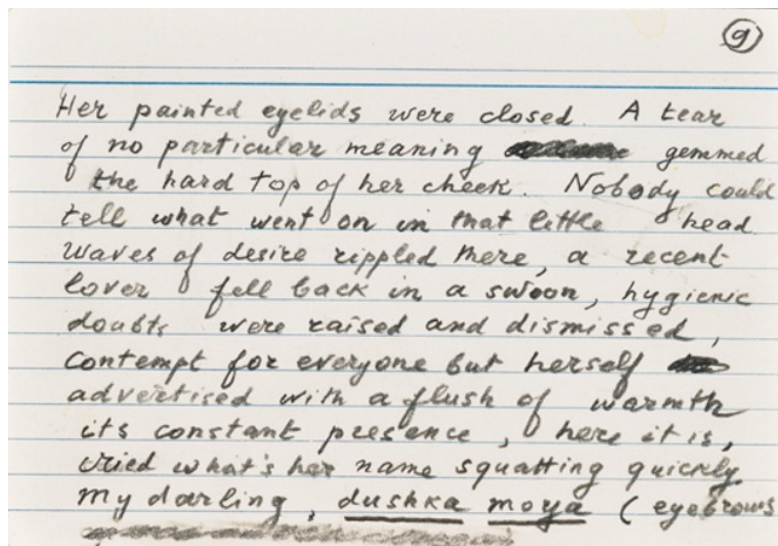
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an extravagantly slender girl. Her ribs showed. The conspicuous knobs of her hipbones framed a hollowed abdomen, so flat as to belie the notion of "belly". Her exquisite bone structure immediately slipped into a novel — became in fact the secret structure of that novel, besides supporting a number of poems. The cup-sized breasts of that twenty-four year old impatient beauty seemed a dozen years younger than she, with those pale squinty nipples and firm form.

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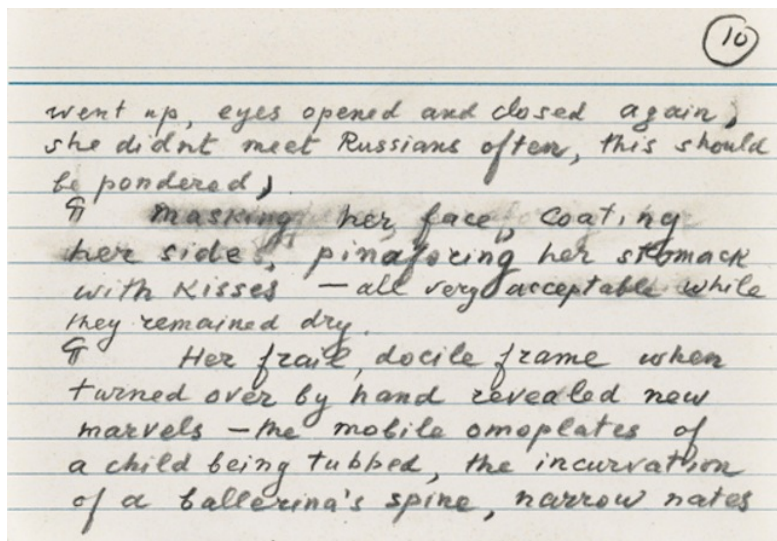
8

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Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Her painted eyelids were closed. A tear of no particular meaning gemmed the hard top of her cheek. Nobody could tell what went on in that little head[.] Waves of desire rippled there, a recent lover fell back in a swoon, hygienic doubts were raised and dismissed, contempt for everyone but herself advertised with a flush of warmth its constant presence, here it is, cried what's her name squatting quickly. My darling, dushka moya (eyebrows



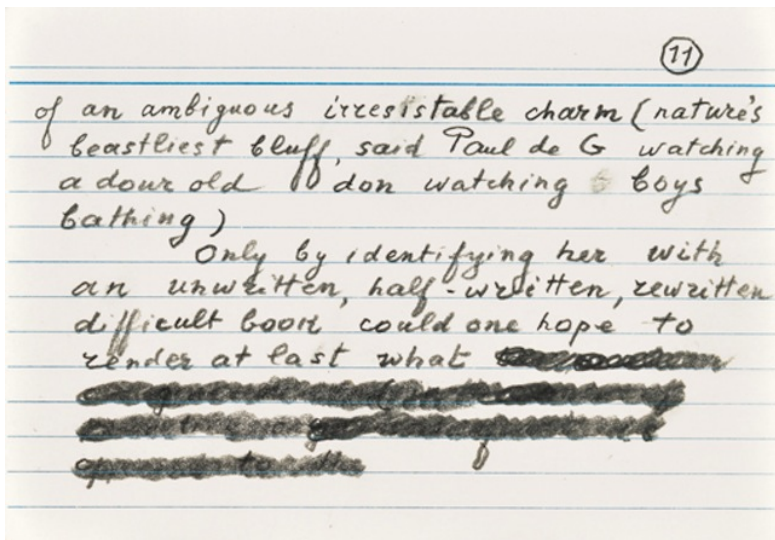
Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

10

went up, eyes opened and closed again, she didnt meet Russians often, this should be pondered.)

Masking her face, coating her side, pinaforing her stomach with kisses—all very acceptable while they remained dry.

Her frail, docile frame when turned over by hand revealed new marvels—the mobile omoplates of a child being tubbed, the incurvation of a ballerina's spine, narrow nates



Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

of an ambiguous irresistible charm (nature's beastliest bluff, said Paul de G watching a dour old don watching boys bathing)

Only by identifying her with an unwritten, half-written, rewritten difficult book could one hope to render at last what

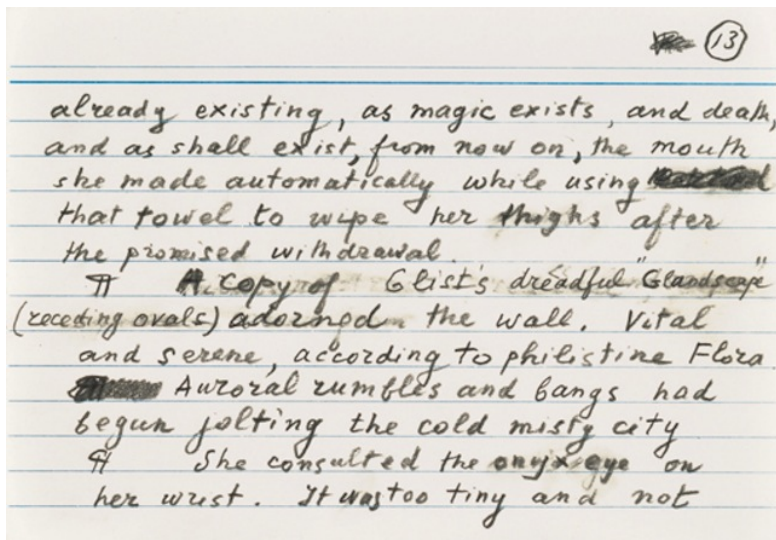
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contemporary descriptions of intercourse so seldom convey, because newborn and thus generalized, ~~in~~ in the sense of primitive organisms of art as opposed to the personal achievement of great English poets dealing with an evening in the country, a bit of sky in a river, the nostalgia of remote sounds—things utterly ^{beyond the} ~~reach~~ of Homer or Horace. ^(reach) Readers are directed to that book—on a very high shelf, in a very bad light—but

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

12

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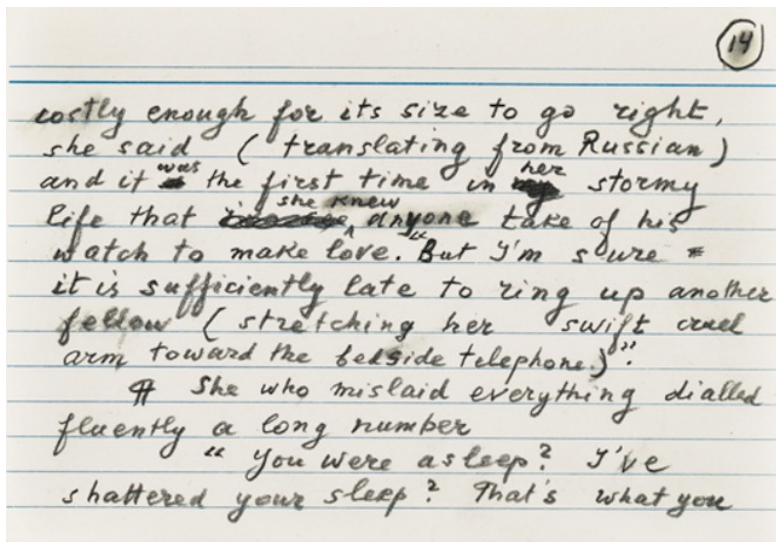
Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

13

already existing, as magic exists, and death, and as shall exist, from now on, the mouth she made automatically while using that towel to wipe her thighs after the promised withdrawal.

A copy of Glist's dreadful "Glandscape" (receding ovals) adorned the wall. Vital and serene, according to philistine Flora. Auroral rumbles and bangs had begun jolting the cold misty city[.]

She consulted the onyx eye on her wrist. It was too tiny and not

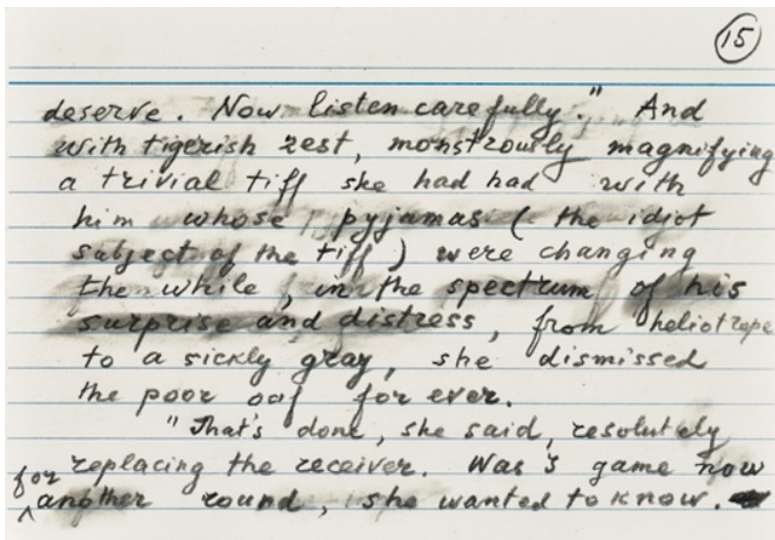


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costly enough for its size to go right, she said (translating from Russian) and it was the first time in her stormy life that she knew anyone take of[f] his watch to make love. "But I'm sure it is sufficiently late to ring up another fellow (stretching her swift cruel arm toward the bedside telephone)."

She who mislaid everything dialled fluently a long number

"You were asleep? I've shattered your sleep? That's what you



Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

15

deserve. Now listen carefully." And with tigerish zest, monstrously magnifying a trivial tiff she had had with him whose pyjamas (the idiot subject of the tiff) were changing the while, in the spectrum of his surprise and distress, from heliotrope to a sickly gray, she dismissed the poor oaf for ever.

"That's done,["] she said, resolutely replacing the receiver. Was I game now for another round, she wanted to know.

(16)

No? Not even a quickie? Well, tant pis. Try to find me some liquor in their kitchen, and then take ^{me} home.

¶ The position of her head, its trustful proximity, its gratefully shouldered weight, the tickle of her hair, endured all through the drive; yet ~~to~~ ~~she~~ she was not asleep, and with the greatest exactitude had the taxi stop to let her out ~~at~~ ~~at~~ at the corner of Heine street, not too far from, nor too close to, her

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house. This was an old villa backed by tall trees. In the shadows of a side alley a ^{young man} ~~man~~ with a mackintosh over his white pyjamas was wringing his hands. The street lights were going out in alternate order, the odd numbers first. Along the pavement in front of the villa her obese husband, in a rumpled black suit and tartan booties with clasps, was walking a striped cat on an overlong leash. She made for the front door.

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

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Her husband followed, now carrying the cat. The scene might be called somewhat incongruous. The animal seemed naively fascinated by the snake trailing behind on the ground.

¶¶¶ Not wishing to harness herself to futurity, she declined to discuss another rendez-vous. To prod her slightly, a messenger called at her domicile three days later. He brought from the favorite florist of fashionable girls a banal bevy ~~of flowers~~

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

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(19)

of bird-of-paradise flowers. Cora, the mulatto chambermaid, who let him in, surveyed the shabby courier, his comic cap, his wan countenance with its three days growth of blond beard, and was about to ^{raise her chin and} embrace his rustling load but he said "No, I've been ordered to give this to Madame herself." "You French?", asked scornful Cora (the whole scene was pretty artificial in a fishy theatrical way). He shook his head — and here

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

19

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Madame appeared from the breakfast room. First of all she dismissed Cora with the strelitzias (hateful blooms, regalized bananas, really).

"Look," she said to the beaming bum, "if you ever repeat this idiotic performance, I will never see you again. I swear I won't! In fact, I have a great mind—" He flattened her against the wall between his outstretched arms; Flora ducked, and freed herself, and showed him the door; but the telephone was already ringing ~~ecstatically~~ ^{ecstatically} when he reached his lodgings.

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

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Her grandfather, the painter Lev Linde, emigrated in 1920 from Moscow to New York with his wife Eva and his son Adam. He also brought over a large collection of his landscapes, either unsold or loaned to him by kind friends and ignorant institutions—pictures that were said to be the glory of Russia, and the pride of the people. How many times art albums had reproduced those meticulous masterpieces—clearings in pine woods, with a bear cub or two, and brown brooks between thawing snow-banks, and the vastness of ~~breathy~~ purple heaths!

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Two 1

Ch. Two

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Two (2)

Native "decadents" had been calling them
"calendar tripe" for the last three decades
~~and~~; yet ^{Linde} had always had ~~the~~
an army of stout admirers; ~~the~~ mighty few
of them turned up at his exhibitions in
America. Very soon a number of
~~unconsoled~~ unconsolable oils found
themselves being shipped back to Moscow, while
another batch moped in rented
flats before tramping up to ~~the~~ the attic
or ~~creeping~~ down to the market stall.
¶ What can be sadder than a discouraged

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

Two 2

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What can be sadder than a discouraged

Two (3)

artist dying not from his own commonplace
maladies, but from the cancer of
oblivion invading his once famous "pictures
such as "April in Yalta" or "The Old
Bridge". Let us not dwell on the
choice of the wrong place of exile. Let
us not linger at that pitiful bedside.
¶ His son Adam Lind (he dropped the
last letter on the tacite advice of a misprint
in a catalogue) was more successful. By the age
of thirty he ^{he had become} a fashionable photographer.
He married the ballerina Lanskaya,

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Two 3

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Two (4)

a delightful dancer, though with something fragile and gauche about her that kept her teetering on a narrow ledge between benevolent recognition and the rave reviews ~~of~~^{of} nonentities. Her first lovers belonged mostly to the Union of Property Movers, ~~not~~ simple fellows of Polish extraction; but Flora was probably ~~Adam's~~ Adam's daughter. Three years after her birth Adam discovered that the boy he loved had strangled ~~another~~ another, unattainable, boy

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Two 4

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Two (5)

whom he loved even more. Adam Lind had always had an inclination for trick photography and this time, before shooting himself in a Montecarlo hotel (on the night, sad to ^{relate} of his wife's very real success in Piker's "Narcisse et Narcette"), he geared and focussed his camera in a corner of the drawing room ~~in such~~ so ~~as to~~ as to record the event from different angles. These automatic pictures of his last moments and of a table's lion-paws did not come out to well; but his widow

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

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Two (6)

easily sold them for the price of a flat in Paris to the local magazine Pitch which specialized in soccer and diabolical faits-divers.

It With her ~~daughter~~ little daughter, an English governess, a Russian nanny, and a cosmopolitan lover, she settled in Paris, then moved to Florence, sojourned in London and returned to France. Her art was not strong enough to survive the loss of good looks ^{as well as} a certain ~~worsening~~ ^{worsening} flaw in her pretty but too prominent right omoplate, and by the ~~month~~

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Two 6

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age of forty or so we find her reduced to giving dancing lessons at a not quite first-rate school in Paris.

¶ Her glamorous ~~Lovers~~ were now replaced by an elderly but still vigorous Englishmen ~~Englishmen~~ who sought abroad a refuge from taxes and ^a convenient place to conduct his not quite legal transactions in the traffic of wines. He was what used to be termed a charmeur. His name, no doubt assumed, was Hubert H. Hubert.

¶ Flora, a lovely child, as she said

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Two 7

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Flora, a lovely child, as she said

Two ⑧

herself with a slight shake (dreamy? ~~incredulous~~
Incredulous?) of her head every time she
spoke of those prepubescent years, had
a gray home life marked by ill health,
~~loneliness~~ and boredom. Only some very
expensive, super-Oriental doctor with long
gentle fingers could have analyzed her
nightly dreams of erotic torture in
so called "labs", major and minor
laboratories with red curtains. She did
not remember her father and rather disliked
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Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Two 8

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Two (9)

the house with Mr. Hubert, who constantly "prowled" (rodait) around her, humming a monotonous tune and sort of mesmerising her, envelopping her, so to speak in some sticky invisible substance and coming closer and closer no matter what way she turned. For instance she did not dare to let her arms hang aimlessly lest her knuckles came into contact with some horrible part of that kindly but smelly and "pushing" old ~~man~~ male.

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Two 9

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Two 10

(her)

He told stories about his sad life, he told her about his daughter who was just like her, same age—twelve—, same eyelashes—darker than the dark blue ^{of the} iris, same ~~hair~~ hair, blondish or rather palomino, and so silky—if he could be allowed to stroke it, or l'effleurer des levres, like this, that's all, thank you. Poor Daisy had been crushed to death by a backing lorry on a country road—short cut home from school—

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Two 10

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through a muddy construction site—abominable tragedy—her mother ^{died} of a broken heart. Mr. Hubert ^{sat} ~~on~~ ^{on Flora's bed} and nodded ~~his bald head~~ ^{acknowledging} all the ~~in~~ ^{offences} of life, and wiped his eyes with a violet ~~handkerchief~~ ^{handkerchief} which turned orange—a little parlor trick—when he stuffed ^{it} back into his heart-pocket, and continued to nod ~~as he~~ ^{as he} tried to adjust his thick outsole to a pattern of the carpet. He looked now like a not too successful conjuror paid to tell

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Two 11

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Two (12)

fairytale to a sleepy child at bedtime, but he sat a little too close. Flora wore a nightgown with short sleeves copied from that of the Montglas de Sancerre girl, ~~hardly a very sweet~~ ^{a very sweet} and depraved schoolmate, who taught her where to kick an enterprising gentleman.

A week or so later Flora happened to be laid up with a chest cold. The mercury went up to 38° in the late afternoon and she complained of a dull buzz

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Two 12

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A week or so later Flora happened to be laid up with a chest cold. The mercury went up to 38° in the late afternoon and she complained of a dull buzz

in the temples. Mrs Lind cursed the old housemaid for buying asparagus instead of Asperin and hurried to the pharmacy herself. Mr Hubert had brought his pet a thoughtful present: a miniature chess set ("she knew the moves") with tickly-looking little holes bored in the squares to admit and grip the red and white pieces; the pin-sized pawns penetrated easily, but the slightly larger noblemen had to be forced in with an enervating joggle. The pharmacy was perhaps closed

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Two (14)

and she had to go to the one next to the church or else she had met some friend of hers in the street and would never return. A fourfold smell - tobacco, sweat, rum and bad teeth - emanated from poor old harmless Mr Hubert, it was all very pathetic. His fat porous nose with red nostrils full of hair nearly touched her bare throat as he helped to prop the pillows behind her shoulders, and ^{the} muddy road was again, was for ever a short cut between here and school, between school and death,

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Two 14

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with Daisy's bicycle wobbling in the indelible fog. She, too, had "known the moves", and had loved the en passant trick as one loves a new toy, but it cropped up so seldom, though he tried to prepare those magic positions where the ghost of a pawn ^{can be} captured on the square it has crossed, ~~never to be seen again~~. Fever, however, turns games of skill into ^{the} stuff of nightmares. After a few minutes of play Flora grew tired of it, put a rook in her mouth, ejected it,

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Two 15

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clowning dully. She pushed the board away and Mr. Hubert carefully removed it to the chair that supported the tea things. Then, with a father's sudden concern, he said "I'm afraid you are chilly, my love," and plunging a hand under the bedclothes from his vantage point at the footboard, he felt her shins. Flora uttered a yelp and then a few screams. Freeing themselves from the tumbled sheets her pedalling legs hit him ⁱⁿ the crotch. As he lurched aside, the teapot, a saucer of raspberry jam,

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Two 16

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Two (17)

an several tiny chessmen joined in the silly
fray. Mrs Lind who had just returned and
was sampling some grapes she had bought,
heard the screams and the crash and
arrived at a dancer's run. She soothed
the absolutely furious, deeply insulted
Mr Hubert before scolding her daughter.
He was a dear man, and his life lay
in ruins all around him. He wanted
to marry her, saying she was the image
of ^{the} young actress who had been his wife,
and indeed to judge by the photographs

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Two 17

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she, Madame Lanskaya, did resemble
~~poor Daisy's mother.~~ poor Daisy's mother.

There is little to be added about the
~~last~~ incidental, but not unattractive
 Mr Hubert H. Hubert. He ~~lived~~ ^{lodged for} another
 happy year in that cosy house and
 died of a stroke in a hotel lift
 after a business dinner. Going up,
 one would like to surmise.

— . —

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Two 18

she, Madame Lanskaya, did resemble poor Daisy's mother.

There is little to add about the incidental, but not unattractive Mr Hubert H. Hubert. He lodged for another happy year in that cosy house and died of a stroke in a hotel lift after a business dinner. Going up, one would like to surmise.

Flora was barely fourteen when she lost her virginity to a coeval, a handsome ballboy at the Carlton Courts in Cannes. Three or four broken porch steps—which was all that remained of an ornate public toilet or some ancient templet—smothered in mints and campanulas and surrounded by junipers, formed the site of a duty she had resolved to perform ^{rather} than ~~of~~ a casual pleasure she was now learning to taste. She observed with quiet interest the difficulty Jules had of drawing a junior-size sheath over an

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)**Three 1**

Ch. Three

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Three ②

organ that looked ^{abnormally} ~~monstrously~~ stout and had a head ^{at full erection} turned somewhat askew as if wary of ~~the~~ ^{receiving a} backhand slap at the decisive moment. Flora let ^{Jules do} ~~himself~~ everything he desired except kiss her on the ~~ear~~ mouth, and the only words ~~that were~~ said referred to the next assignation. ~~and the only words said referred to the next assignation.~~

¶ One evening after a hard day picking up and tossing balls and pattering in a crouch across court between the rallies of a long tournament the poor boy, stinking more than usual, pleaded

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Three 2

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One evening after a hard day picking up and tossing balls and pattering in a crouch across court between the rallies of a long tournament the poor boy, stinking more than usual, pleaded

Three (3)

utter exhaustion and suggested going to a movie instead of making love; whereupon she walked away through the high heather and never saw Jules again — except when taking her tennis lessons with the ^{stodgy} old Basque in uncreased white trousers who had coached players in Odessa before World War One and still retained his effortless exquisite style.

¶ Back in Paris Flora found new lovers. With a gifted youngster from the Lansckaya school and another

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Three 3

utter exhaustion and suggested going to a movie instead of making love; whereupon she walked away through the high heather and never saw Jules again—except when taking her tennis lessons with the stodgy old Basque in uncreased white trousers who had coached players in Odessa before World War One and still retained his effortless exquisite style.

Back in Paris Flora found new lovers. With a gifted youngster from the [Lanskaya] school and another

Three (4)

eager, more or less interchangeable couple she would bicycle through the Blue Fountain Forest to a romantic refuge where a sparkle of broken glass or a lace-edged rag on the moss were the only signs of an earlier period of literature. A cloudless September maddened the crickets. The girls would compare the dimensions of their companions. Exchanges would ^{be} enjoyed with giggles and cries of surprise. Games of blindman's buff would be played in the buff. Sometimes a voyeur would be shaken out of a tree by the vigilant police.

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Three 4

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Three ⑤

¶ This is Flora of the close-set dark-blue ~~eyes~~ eyes and cruel mouth recollecting in her midtwenties fragments of her past, with details lost or put back in the wrong order, TAIL between DELTA and SLIT, on dusty dim shelves, this is she. Everything about her is bound to remain blurry, even her name which seems to have been made expressly to have another one modelled upon it by a fantastically lucky artist. Of art, of love, of the

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Three 5

This is Flora of the close-set dark-blue eyes and cruel mouth recollecting in her midtwenties fragments of her past, with details lost or put back in the wrong order, TAIL betwe[e]n DELTA and SLIT, on dusty dim shelves, this is she. Everything about her is bound to remain blurry, even her name which seems to have been made expressly to have another one modelled upon it by a fantastically lucky artist. Of art, of love, of the

Three (6)

difference between dreaming and waking she knew nothing but would have darted at you like a flatheaded blue serpent if you questioned her ~~knowledge~~ of dreaming.

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Three 6

difference between dreaming and waking she knew nothing but would have darted at you like a flatheaded blue serpent if you questioned her.

She returned with her mother and Mr. Espenshade to Sutton, Mass. where she was born and now went to college in that town.

At eleven she had read a qu'on
 revent les enfants, by a
 certain Dr Freud, a madman.

The extracts came in a St Leger d'Exupere
 series of Les great representant de notre epoque
 though why great representant wrote
 so badly remained a mystery

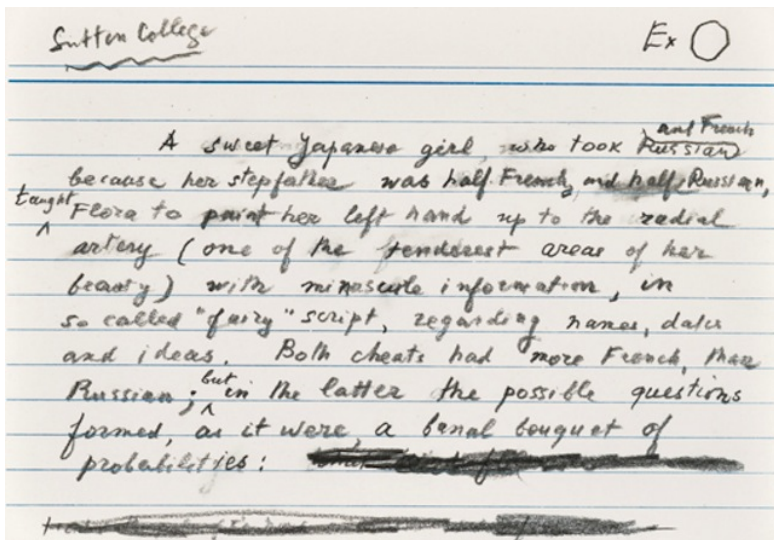
Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Three 7

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Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Ex [0]

Sutton College

A sweet Japanese girl who took Russian and French because her stepfather was half French and half Russian, taught Flora to paint her left hand up to the radial artery (one of the tenderest areas of her beauty) with minuscule information, in so called "fairy" script, regarding names, dates and ideas. Both cheats had more French, than Russian; but in the latter the possible questions formed, as it were, a banal bouquet of probabilities:

Ex ①

Kind of _____ in Rus?;

What folklore preceded poetry; speak a little of Lom. and Derzh.; paraphrase T's letter to E.O.; what does I.I.'s doctor deplore ^{about} the temperature of his own hands when preparing to _____ his patient? — such was the information ^{demanding} by the professor of Russian Literature (a forlorn looking man bored to extinction by his subject). As to the lady who taught French Literature all she needed were the names of modern French writers and their listing on Flora's palm caused a much denser tickle. Especially memorable

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

Ex [1]

What kind of folklore preceded poetry in Rus?; speak a little of Lom. and Derzh.; paraphrase T's letter to E.O.; what does I.I.'s doctor deplore about the temperature of his own hands when preparing to [] his patient?—such was the information demanded by the professor of Russian Literature (a forlorn looking man bored to extinction by his subject).* As to the lady who taught French Literature[,] all she needed were the names of modern French writers and their listing on Flora's palm caused a much denser tickle[.] Especially memorable

*References are to Lomonosov and Derzhavin, Pushkin's Eugene Onegin and Tatanya, and Tolstoy's Ivan Ilyich; [] is used to indicate an intentional blank space throughout. —Dmitri Nabokov

^{little}
 was the cluster of interlocked names on the ball of
 Flora's thumb: Malraux, Mauriac, Maurois, Michaux,
 Michima, Montherland ^{and} Morand. What
 amazes one is not the alliteration (a joke
 on the part of the mannered alphabet);
 not the inclusion of a foreign performer (a
 joke on the part of that fun loving little
 Japanese girl who would twist her
 limbs into a pretzel when entertaining
 Flora's Lesbian friends); and not even
 the fact that ~~virtually~~ all those
 writers were stunning mediocrities

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Ex [2]

Modern French writers

was the little cluster of interlocked names on the ball of Flora's thumb:
 Malraux, Mauriac, Maurois, Michaux, Michima, Montherland and Morand.
 What amazes one is not the alliteration (a joke on the part of a mannered
 alphabet); not the inclusion of a foreign performer (a joke on the part of
 that fun loving little Japanese [girl] who would twist her limbs into a pretzel
 when entertaining Flora's Lesbian friends); and not even the fact that virtually
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Ex (3)

as writers go (the first in the list being the worst); what amazes one is that they were supposed ~~to~~ ~~represent an era~~ to "represent an era" and that ~~the~~ such representants ~~could~~ could get away with the most execrable writing, provided they represent their times.

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Ex [3]

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Chapter Four

Four (1)

A Mrs. Lanskaya died on the day her daughter graduated from Sutton College. A new fountain had just been bequeathed to its campus by a former student, the widow of a shah. Generally speaking, one should carefully preserve in transliteration the feminine ending of a Russian surname (such as -aya, instead of the masculine -iy or -oy) when the woman in question is an artistic celebrity. So let it be "Lanskaya" — land and sky and the melancholy echo

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

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Chapter Four

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Four (2)

of her dancing name. The fountain took quite a time to get correctly erected after an initial series of unevenly spaced spasms. The potentate had been potent till the absurd age of eighty. It was a very hot day with its blue somewhat veiled. A few photographs moved among the crowd as indifferent to it as specters doing their spectral job. And certainly for no earthly reason does this passage ~~resemble in rhythm~~ resemble in rhythm another novel,

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

Four 2

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Four (3)

My Laura, where the mother appears as "Maya Umanskaya", a fabricated film actress.

Anyway, she suddenly collapsed on the lawn in the middle of the beautiful ceremony. A remarkable picture commemorated the event in "File". It showed Flora kneeling belatedly in the act of taking her mother's non-existent pulse, and it also showed a man of great corpulence and fame, still unacquainted with Flora: he stood just behind her, head bared and bowed, staring at the white of her

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

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Four (4)

legs under her black gown and at the
fair hair under her academic cap.

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

Four 4

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Chapter Five

Five ①

¶ A brilliant neurologist, a renowned lecturer, a gentleman of independent means, Dr Philip Wild had everything save an attractive exterior. However, one soon got over the shock of seeing that enormously fat creature mince toward the lectern on ridiculously small feet and of hearing the cock-a-doodle sound with which he cleared his throat before starting to enchant one with his wit. Laura disregarded the wit but was mesmerized by his fame and fortune.

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Five 1

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Five (2)

¶ Fans were back that summer - the summer she made up her mind that the eminent Philip Wild, PH, would marry her. She had just opened a boutique d'éventails with another Sutton coed and the Polish artist Rawitch, pronounced by some Raw Itch, by him Rah Witch. Black fans and violet ones, fans like orange sunbursts, painted fans with clubtailed Chinese butterflies oh they were a great hit, and one day Wild came and bought five (~~five~~ spreading out her own fingers like pleats)

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

Five 2

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for "two aunts and three nieces" who did not really exist, but nevermind, it was an unusual extravagance on his part. His shyness surprised and amused FLaura.

¶ Less amusing surprises awaited her. To day after three years of marriage she had enough of his fortune and fame. He was a domestic miser. His New Jersey house was absurdly understaffed. The ranchito in Arizona had not been redecorated for years. The villa on the

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Five 3

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Five 4

Riviera had no swimming pool and only one bathroom. When she started to change all that, he would emit a kind of mild creak or squeak, and his brown eyes brimmed with sudden tears.

91

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Five 4

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~~Chapman~~

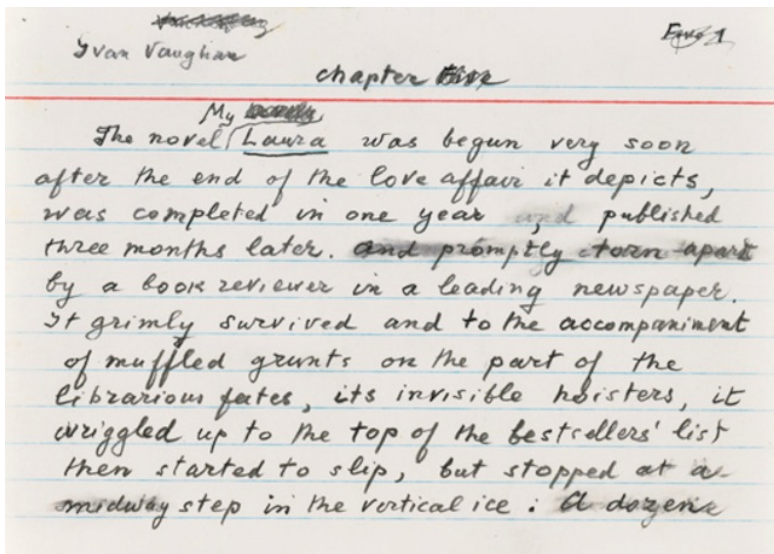
Five (5)

She saw their travels in terms of
adverts and a long talcum-white beach with
the tropical breeze tossing the palms and her hair;
he saw it ⁱⁿ terms of forbidden foods,
frittered away time, and ghastly expenses.

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Five 5

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Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Five 1
Chapter [Five]*

Ivan Vaughan

The novel My Laura was begun very soon after the end of the love affair it depicts, was completed in one year, published three months later[,] and promptly torn apart by a book reviewer in a leading newspaper. It grimly survived and to the accompaniment of muffled grunts on the part of the librarious fates, its invisible hoisters, it wriggled up to the top of the bestsellers' list then started to slip, but stopped at a midway step in the vertical ice. A dozen

* This chapter was originally numbered as chapter five, but the author seems to have intended to change its number.

Sundays passed and one had the impression that Laura had somehow got stuck on the seventh step (the last respectable one) or that, perhaps, some anonymous agent working for the author was buying up every week just enough copies to keep Laura there; but a day came when the climber above lost his foothold and toppled down dislodging number seven and eight and nine and a general collapse beyond any hope of recovery.

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Five 2

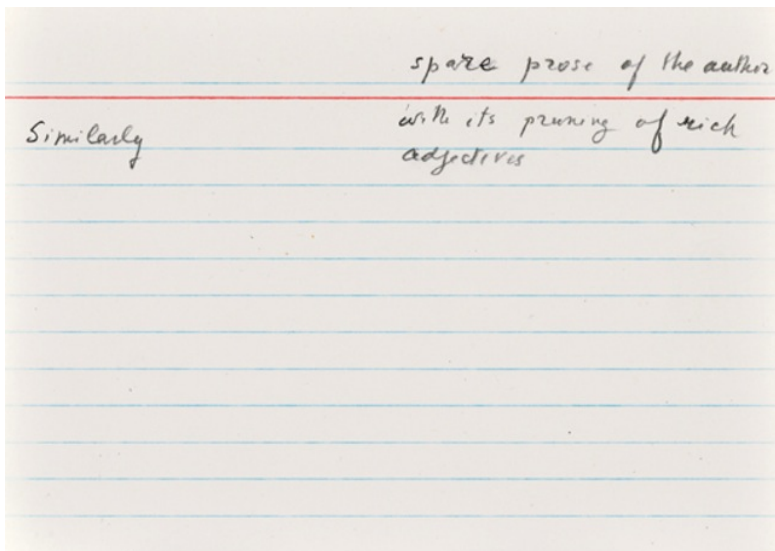
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A The "I" of the book is ~~neurotic~~
 a neurotic and hesitant man of letters,
 who destroys his mistress in the act of
 portraying her. Statically - if one can
 put it that way - the portrait is a faithful
 one. Such fixed details as her trick of
 opening her mouth when toweling her inguen
 or of closing her eyes when smelling an inodorous^{inodorous} rose
 are absolutely true to the original.

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Five 3

The "I" of the book is a neurotic and hesitant man of letters, who destroys his mistress in the act of portraying her. Statically—if one can put it that way—the portrait is a faithful one. Such fixed details as her trick of opening her mouth when toweling her inguen or of closing her eyes when smelling an inodorous rose are absolutely true to the original.



Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

Similarly [the] spare prose of the author with its pruning of rich adjectives

Philip Wild read "Laura" where
he is sympathetically depicted as a conventional
"great scientist" and though not a single
physical trait is mentioned, comes out
with astounding classical clarity.
under the name of ~~Phil~~ Philidor Sauvage
1891

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

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Times Dec. 18 75

find substitute
term for enkephalin

"An ^[c?]enkephalin present in the brain
has now been produced synthetically." "It is
like morphine and other opiate drugs"
Further research will show how and why
"morphine has for centuries produced relief
from pain and feelings of euphoria"
[invent tradename, e.g. cephalopium] ←
[I taught thought to mimick an ^{imperial} awesome messenger
~~carrying~~ neurotransmitter carrying
my order of self destruction
to my ~~own~~ brain. Suicide made
a pleasure,

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

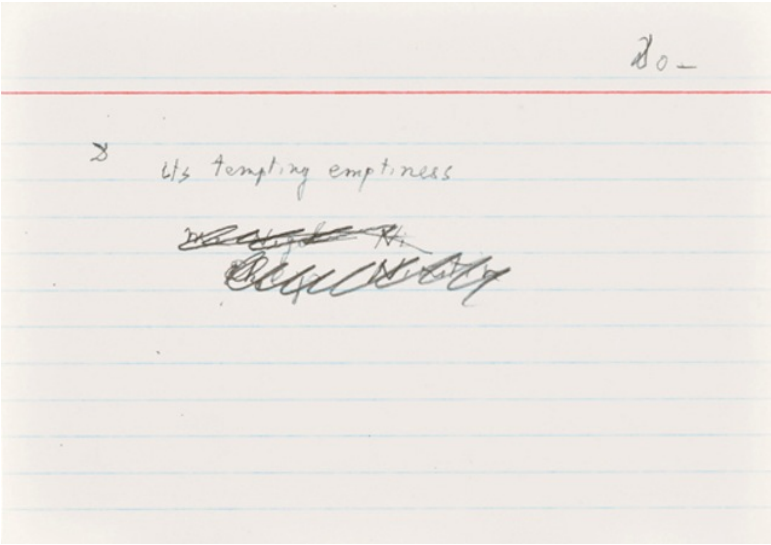
[Chapter Six]

Times Dec. 18 75

"An enk(c?)ephalin present in the brain has now been produced synthetically"
"It is like morphine and other opiate drugs" Further research will show how
and why "morphine has for centuries produced relief from pain and feelings of
euphoria".

(invent tradename, e.g. cephalopium[;] find substitute term for enkephalin)

I taught thought to mimick an imperial neurotransmitter an aw[e]some
messenger carrying my order of self destruction
to my ~~own~~ brain. Suicide made
a pleasure,



Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

D₀

D
its tempting emptiness

Settling for a single line

D1

The student who desires to die should learn first of all to project a mental image of himself upon his inner blackboard. This surface which at its virgin best has a dark-plum, rather than black, depth of opacity is none other than the underside of one's closed eyelids.

¶ To ensure a complete smoothness of background, care must be taken to eliminate the hypnagogic gargoyles and entoptic swarms which plague tired

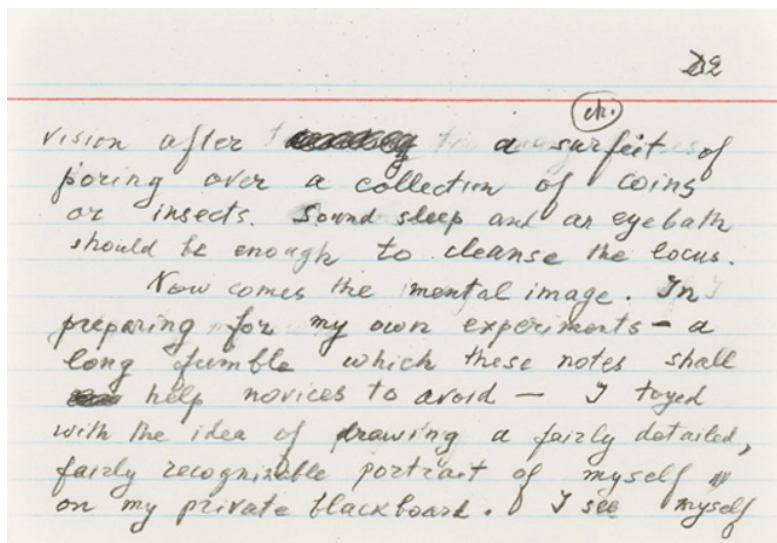
Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

D1

Settling for a single line

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Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

D₂

vision after a surfeit of poring over a collection of coins or insects. Sound sleep and an eyebath should be enough to cleanse the locus.

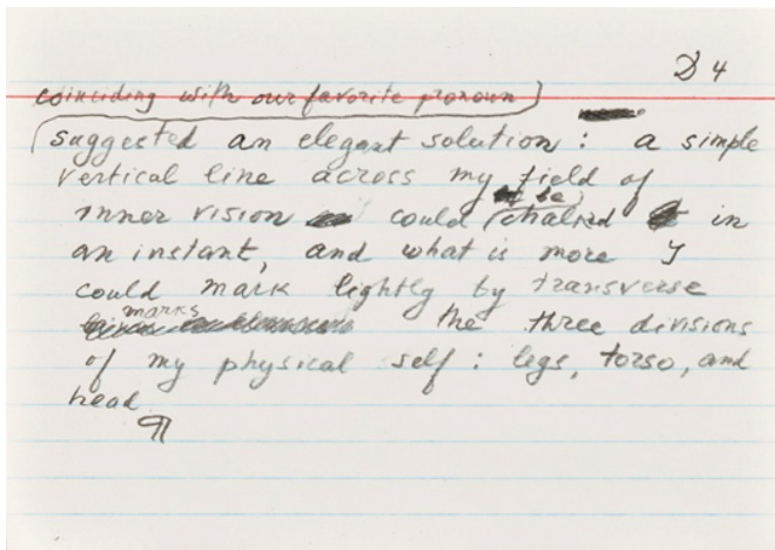
Now comes the mental image. In preparing for my own experiments—a long fumble which these notes shall help novices to avoid—I toyed with the idea of drawing a fairly detailed, fairly recognizable portrait of myself on my private blackboard. I see myself

in my closet glass as an obese ^{bulk} ~~bulk~~ with formless features and a sad porcine stare; but my visual imagination is nil, and I am quite unable to tuck Nigel Delling under my eyelid, let alone keeping him there in ~~fixed~~ a fixed aspect of flesh for any length of time. I then tried various stylizations: a Delling-like doll, a sketchy skeleton. Or would the letters of my name do? Its recurrent "i"

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

D₃

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Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

D₄

coinciding with our favorite pronoun suggested an elegant solution: a simple vertical line across my field of inner vision could be chalked in an instant, and what is more I could mark lightly by transverse marks the three divisions of my physical self: legs, torso, and head

¶ Several months have ^{now gone} ~~passed~~ since I began
 working — not every day and not for protracted
 periods — on the ^{upright line} ~~in~~ ^{time} emblemizing me.
 Soon, with the strong thumb of thought I could
 rub out its base, which corresponded to
 my joined feet. Being new to the process
 of self-deletion, I attributed the ecstatic
 relief of getting rid of my toes (as represented
 by the white pedicule I was erasing with
 more than masturbatory joy) to the fact
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Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

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the sandals of childhood were replaced by smart shoes, whose very polish reflected pain and poison. So what a delight it was to amputate my tiny feet! Yes, tiny, yet I always wanted them, rolly polly dandy that I am, to seem even smaller. The daytime footwear always hurt, always hurt. ~~then~~ I waddled home from work and replaced the agony of my dapper oxfords by the comfort of old bed slippers. This act of mercy inevitably drew from me a voluptuous

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

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sigh which my wife, whenever I imprudently let her hear it, denounced as vulgar, disgusting, obscene. Because [she] was a cruel lady or because she thought I might be clowning on purpose to irritate her, she once ~~one~~ hid my slippers, hid them furthermore in separate spot as one does with delicate siblings in ~~orphanages~~ orphanages, especially on chilly nights, but I forthwith went out and bought twenty pairs of soft, soft Carpatoes while hiding my tear-staining face under a Father Christmas mask, which frightened the shopgirls.

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

D7

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the orange awnings of southern summers.

28

¶ For a moment I wondered with some apprehension if the deletion of my procreative system might produce nothing much more than a magnified orgasm. I was relieved to discover that the process continued ~~the~~ sweet death's ineffable sensation which had nothing in common with ejaculations or sneezes. The three or four times that I reached that stage I forced myself to restore the lower half of my white "I" on my mental blackboard and thus wriggle out of my perilous trance. ¶

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

D8

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I, Philip Wilder-

D9

Lecturer in Experimental Psychology, University
of Gargia
I ~~have~~ suffered for ^{the last} seventeen years from
a humiliating stomach ailment which
severely limited the jollities of companionship
in small dining-rooms

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

D9

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have] suffered for the last seventeen years from a humiliating stomach ailment
which severely limited the jollities of companionship in small dining-rooms

D10

which) I loathe my belly, that trunkful of bowels,
I have to carry around, and everything connected
with it—the wrong food, heartburn, consti-
pation's leaden load, or else indigestion
with a ^{first installment of} hot torrent of filth pouring out of
me in a public toilet three minutes
before a punctual engagement.

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

D10

I loathe my belly, that trunkful of bowels, which I have to carry around, and everything connected with it—the wrong food, heartburn, constipation's leaden load, or else indigestion with a first installment of hot filth pouring out of me in a public toilet three minutes before a punctual engagement.

Heart (D11)
[or Loins?]

There is, there was, only one girl in my life,
 an object of terror and tenderness, an object,
 too, of universal compassion on the part
 of millions who read about her in her
 lover's books. I say "girl" and not woman,
 not wife nor wench. If I were writing
 in my first language I would have said "fille".
 A sidewalk cafe, a summer-striped Sunday:
 il regardait passer les filles — that sense.
 Not professional whores, not necessarily
 well-to-do tourists but "fille" as a translation
 of "girl" which I now retranslate:

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

D11

Heart (or Loins?)

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from heel to hip, then the
trunk, then the head

~~A~~ when nothing was
left but a grotesque
bust and with staring eyes

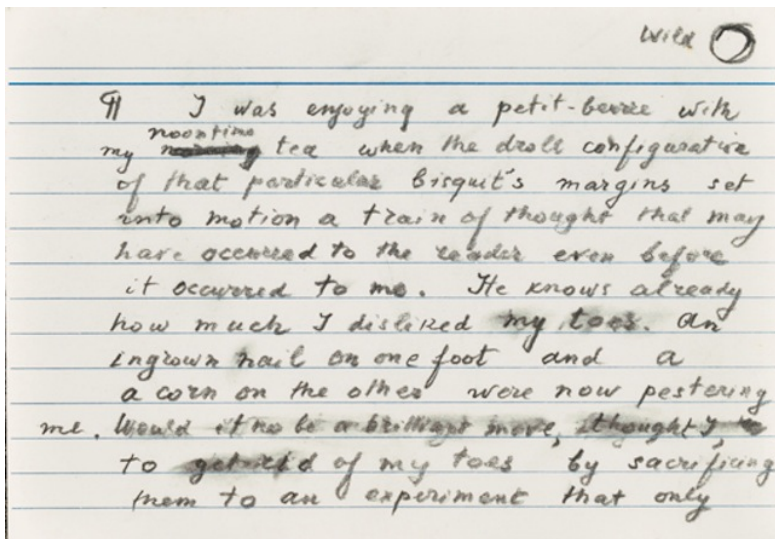
Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

from heel to hip, then the trunk, then the head when nothing was left but a grotesque bust with staring eyes

Sophrosyne, a platonic term for ideal
self control stemming from man's
rational core.

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Sophrosyne, a platonic term for ideal self-control stemming from man's rational core.

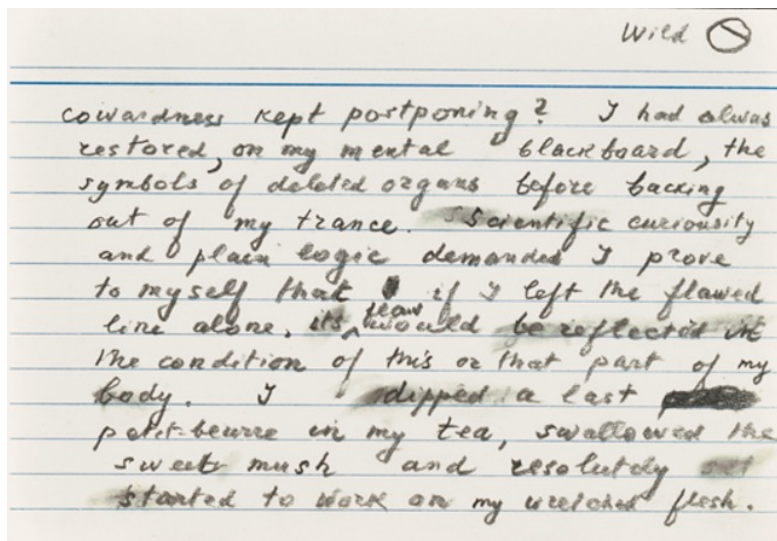


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Wild [0]

[Chapter Seven]

I was enjoying a petit-beurre with my noontime tea when the droll configuration of that particular bisquit's margins set into motion a train of thought that may have occurred to the reader even before it occurred to me. He knows already how much I disliked my toes. An ingrown nail on one foot and a corn on the other were now pestering me. Would it not be a brilliant move, I thought, to get rid of my toes by sacrificing them to an experiment that only



Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Wild [1]

cowardness kept postponing? I had always restored, on my mental blackboard, the symbols of deleted organs before backing out of my trance. Scientific curiosity and plain logic demanded I prove to myself that if I left the flawed line alone, its flaw would be reflected in the condition of this or that part of my body. I dipped a last petit-beurre in my tea, swallowed the sweet mush and resolutely started to work on my wretched flesh.

Will 

¶ Testing a discovery and finding it correct can be a great satisfaction but it can be also a great shock mixed with all the torments of rivalry and ignoble envy. I know at least two such rivals of mine—~~you, Curson, and you, Croydon~~—who will clap their claws like crabs ~~swimming~~ in boiling water. Now when it is the discoverer himself who ~~reaches to~~ tests his discovery and finds that it works he will feel a torrent of pride and purity that will cause him

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

Wild [2]

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Wild 

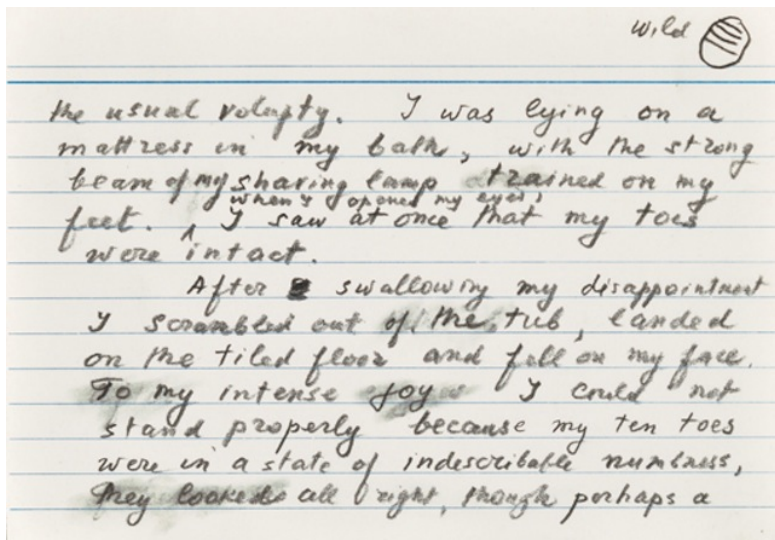
~~So much for the~~ actually to
pity Prof. Curson and pet Dr. Croydon
(whom I see Mr West has demolished in a
recent paper). We are above petty revenge.
¶ On a hot Sunday afternoon, in
my empty house — Flora and Cora being
somewhere in bed with their boyfriends —
I started the crucial test. The fine
base of my chalk white "I" was erased and
left erased when I decided to break
my hypnotrance. The extermination of
my ten toes had been accompanied with

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Wild [3]

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Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Wild [4]

the usual voluptu. I was lying on a mattress in my bath, with the strong beam of my shaving lamp trained on my feet. When I opened my eyes, I saw at once that my toes were intact.

After swallowing my disappointment I scrambled out of the tub, landed on the tiled floor and fell on my face. To my intense joy I could not stand properly because my ten toes were in a state of indescribable numbness. They looked all right, though perhaps a

Wild (11111)

a little paler than usual, but all sensation had been slashed away by a razor of ice. I palpated warily the hallux and the four other digits of my right foot, then of my left one and all was rubber and rot. The immediate setting in of decay was especially sensationally. I crept on all fours into the adjacent bedroom and with infinite effort into my bed.

The rest was mere cleaning-up. In the course of the night I teased off the shrivelled white flesh and contemplated with utmost delight

before his bath

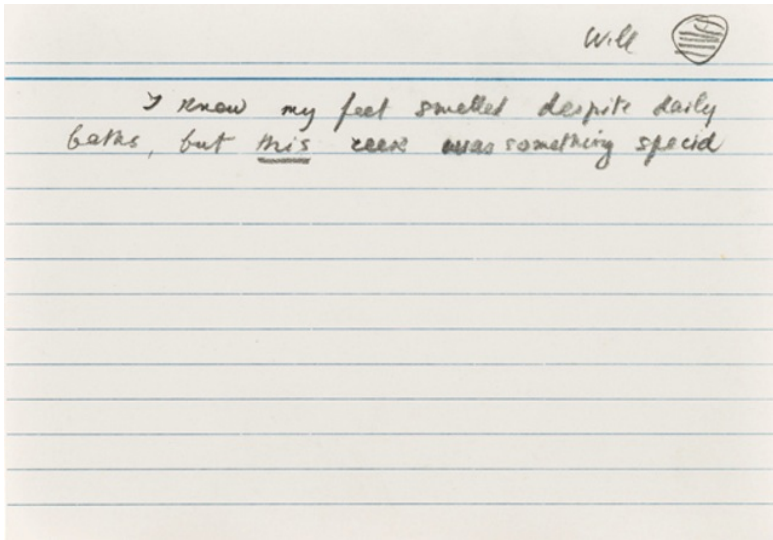
Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

Wild [5]

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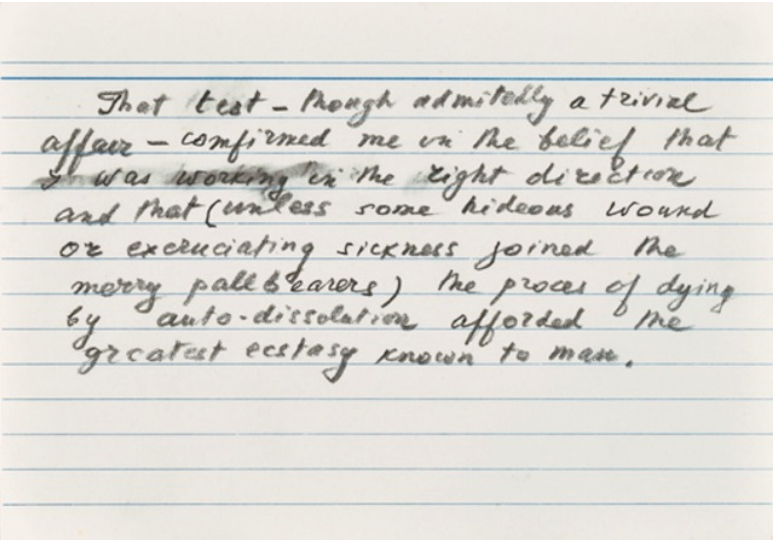
[before his bath]



Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Wild [6]

I know my feet smelled despite daily baths, but this reek was something special



That test—though admittedly a trivial affair—confirmed me in the belief that I was working in the right direction and that (unless some hideous wound or excruciating sickness joined the merry pallbearers) the process of dying by auto-dissolution afforded the greatest ecstasy known to man.

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

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Toes

I expected to see at best the length of each foot greatly reduced with its distal edge neatly transformed into the semblance of the end of a breadloaf without any trace of toes. At worst I was ready to face an anatomical preparation of ten bare phalanges sticking out of my feet like a skeleton's claws. Actually all I saw was the familiar rows of digits.

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

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¶ "Install yourself," said the youngish suntanned, cheerful Dr. Aupert, indicating, openheartedly an armchair at the north rim of his desk, and proceeded to explain the necessity of a surgical intervention. He showed A.N.D. one of the dark ^{grim} urograms that had been taken of A.N.D.'s rear anatomy. The globular shadow of an adenoma eclipsed the greater part of the whitish bladder. This

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

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(2)

~~the prostate~~
benign tumor ~~that~~ had been growing
on the prostate for some fifteen years
and was now as many times its size
the unfortunate gland.
~~could be removed.~~
with the great gray parasite clinging
to it could and should be removed ^{at once}
"And if I refuse?" said AND
"Then, one of these days,

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

2

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"And if I refuse?" said AND.

"Then, one of these days,

that became
 keep it free from
 any intervention.
 tired eyes.
 Such as ^{gargoyles} hypnagogic ~~images~~
~~hallucinations~~ or the
~~entoptic convulsions~~
 a breeding booth of
 entoptic ^{swarms} ~~floaters~~
 a vertical line chalked against
 a ~~the~~ plum^{*} tinted darkness
 over one's collection
 of coins or insects
 a manikin or a
 little skeleton but
 that demanded

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

that back[grd] keep it free from any intervention. tired eyes.

Such as hypnagogic gargoyles* or entoptic swarms*

a vertical line chalked against a plum* tinted darkness

over one's collection of coins or insects

a manikin or a little skeleton but that demanded

* These phrases appear as well on [this page](#), which may indicate that this card is a draft of that material.

very special

In this self-hypnotic state there can be no question of getting out of touch with onself and floating into a normal sleep (unless you are very tired at the start)

To break the trance all you do is to restore in ~~every~~ ^{every} chalk-bright details the simple picture of yourself ^{a stylized skeleton} on your mental blackboard. One should remember, however, that the divine delight in destroying, say one's breastbone should not be indulged in. Enjoy the destruction but do not linger over your own ruins lest you develop an incurable illness, or die before you are ready to die.

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

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the delight of getting under ~~the corner~~
of an ingrown toenail with sharp scissors
and snipping off the offending corner
and the added ecstasy of finding beneath it
an amber abscess whose blood flows
carrying away the ignoble pain

But with age I could not
bend any longer toward my feet
and was ashamed to present
them to a pedicure.

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

the delight of getting under an ingrown toenail with sharp scissors and snipping off the offending corner and the added ecstasy of finding beneath it an amber ab[s]cess whose blood flows[,] carrying away the ignoble pain

But with age I could not bend any longer toward my feet and was ashamed to present them to a pedicure.

~~at the beginning of the~~
Last Chapter

Program of last chapter

¶ [Miss Ure, this is the MS. of my last chapter which you will please, type out in three copies — I need the additional one for prepub in Bud — or some other ~~magazine~~ magazine]

¶ Several years ago, when I was still working at the Horloge Institute of Neurologie, a silly female interviewer introduced me in a silly radio series ("Modern Eccentrics") as "a gentle Oriental sage, founder of (insert cards)"

Hi-Res Image: **Front/Back**

Last Chapter

Beginning of last chapter

[Miss Ure, this is the MS of my last chapter which you will, please, type out in three copies—I need the additional one for prepub in Bud—or some other magazine.]*

Several years ago, when I was still working at the Horloge Institute of Neurologie, a silly female interviewer introduced me in a silly radio series ("Modern Eccentrics") as "a gentle Oriental sage, founder of

*Brackets around the first paragraph may be a reminder to set it as extract.

(Penult. End.)

End of penult chapter.

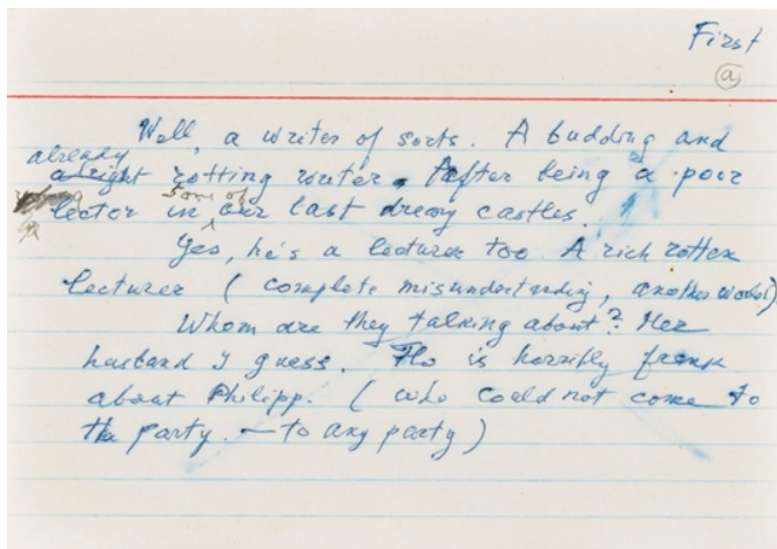
The manuscript in longhand of Wild's last chapter, which at the time of his fatal heart attack, ten blocks away, his typist, Sue U., had not had the time to tackle because of ~~the~~ urgent work for another employer was deftly plucked from her hand by that other fellow who finds a place of publication more permanent than Bud or Root.

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

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Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

First a

Well, a writer of sorts. A budding and already rotting writer. After being a poor lector in some of our last dreary castles.

Yes, he's a lecturer too[.] A rich rotten lecturer (complete misunderstanding, another world).

Whom are they talking about? Her husband I guess. Flo is horribly frank about Philipp. (who could not come to the party—to any party)*

* This material fits in with conversation in the first chapter.

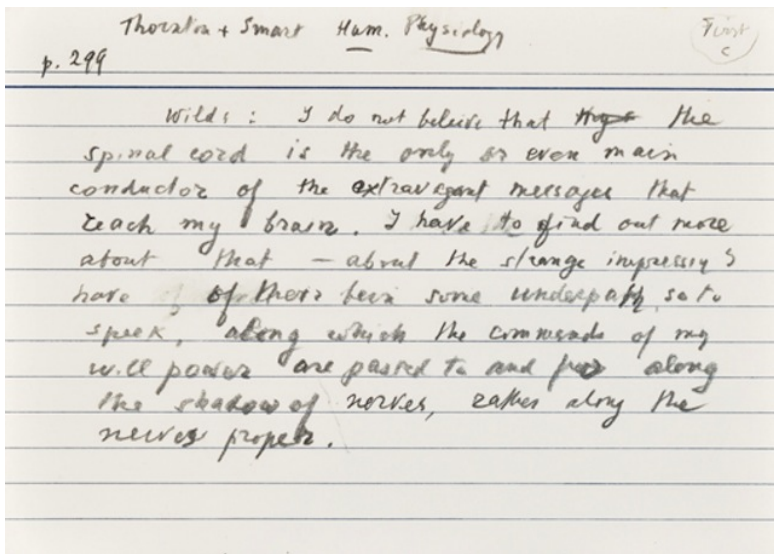
(11/11/11)
6

heart or brain—when the ray projected by me
reaches the lake of Dante's fountain ~~in~~
the Island of Reil in the brain

Hi-Res Image: **Front/Back**

First b

heart or brain—when the ray projected by me reaches the lake of Dante [or]
the Island of Reil

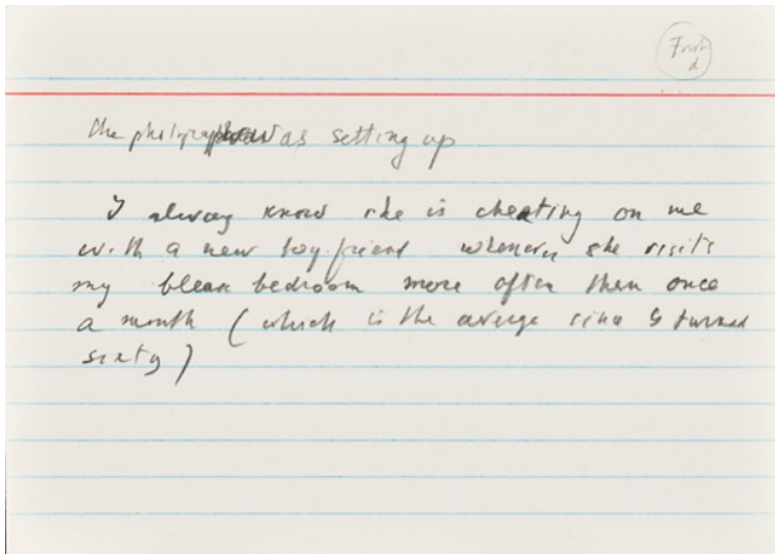


Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

First c

Thornton + Smart Hum. Physiology
p. 299

Wild's [ms.]: I do not believe that the spinal cord is the only or even main conductor of the extravagant messages that reach my brain. I have to find out more about that—about the strange impression I have of there being some underpath, so to speak, along which the commands of my will power are passed to and fro along the shadow of nerves, rather [than] along the nerves proper.



Hi-Res Image: **Front/Back**

First d

The photograph[er] was setting up

I alway[s] know she is cheating on me with a new boy friend whenever she visits my bleak bedroom more often than once a month (which is the average since I turned sixty)

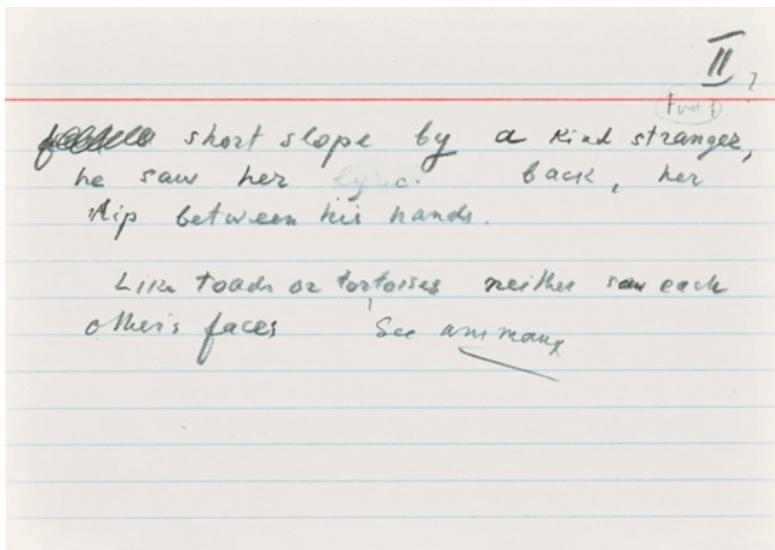
T (C)

The only way he could possess her was in the most position of copulation: he reclining on cushions, she sitting in the fauteuil of his flesh with her back to him. The procedure - a few bounces over very small humps - meant nothing to her. She looked at the snow-scape on the footboard of the bed - at the curtains; and he holding her in front of him like a child being given a sleighride down a

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

I

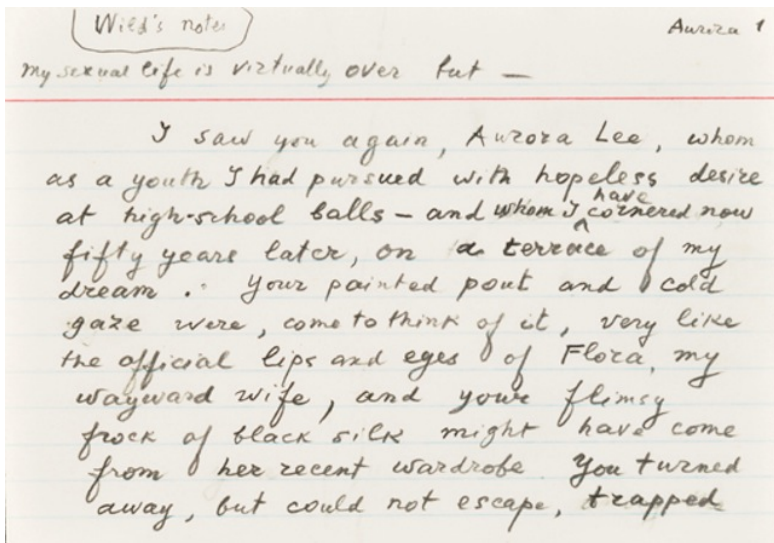
The only way he could possess her was in the most [] position of copulation: he reclining on cushions: she sitting in the fauteuil of his flesh with her back to him. The procedure—a few bounces over very small humps—meant nothing to her[.] She looked at the snow-scape on the footboard of the bed—at the [curtains]; and he holding her in front of him like a child being given a sleighride down a



Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

II

short slope by a kind stranger, he saw her back, her hip[s] between his hands.
Like toads or tortoises neither saw each other's faces See animaux



Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

Aurora 1

Wild's notes

My sexual life is virtually over but—

I saw you again, Aurora Lee, whom as a youth I had pursued with hopeless desire at high-school balls—and whom I have cornered now fifty years later, on a terrace of my dream. Your painted pout and cold gaze were, come to think of it, very like the official lips and eyes of Flora, my wayward wife, and your flimsy frock of black silk might have come from her recent wardrobe. You turned away, but could not escape, trapped

as you were among the
 close-set columns of moonlight and I
 lifted the hem of your dress—something I ~~was~~
 never had done in the past—and stroked,
 moulded, pinched ever so softly your pale,
 prominent nates, while you stood perfectly still
 as if considering new possibilities of
 power and pleasure and interior decoration.
 At the height of your guarded ecstasy I thrust
 my cupped hand ^{from behind} between your consenting
 thighs and felt the ~~front, back,~~
 sweat-stuck folds of a long scrotum and

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Aurora 2

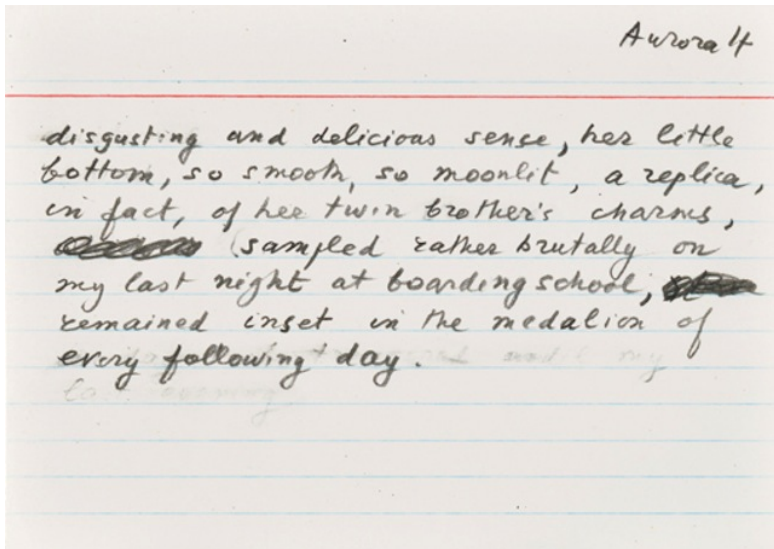
as you were among the close-set columns of moonlight and I lifted the hem of your dress—something I never had done in the past—and stroked, moulded, pinched ever so softly your pale prominent nates, while you stood perfectly still as if considering new possibilities of power and pleasure and interior decoration. At the height of your guarded ecstasy I thrust my cupped hand from behind between your consenting thighs and felt the sweat-stuck folds of a long scrotum and

then, further in front, the droop of a short member. Speaking as ^{an} authority on dreams, I wish to add that this was no homosexual manifestation but a splendid example of terminal gynandrisms. Young Aurora Lee (who was to be axed and chopped up at seventeen by an idiot lover, all glasses and beard) and half-impotent old Wild formed for a moment one creature. But quite apart from all that, in a more

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Aurora 3

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Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Aurora 4

disgusting and delicious sense, her little bottom, so smooth, so moonlit, a replica, in fact, of her twin brother's charms, sampled rather brutally on my last night at boarding school, remained inset in the medalion of every following day.

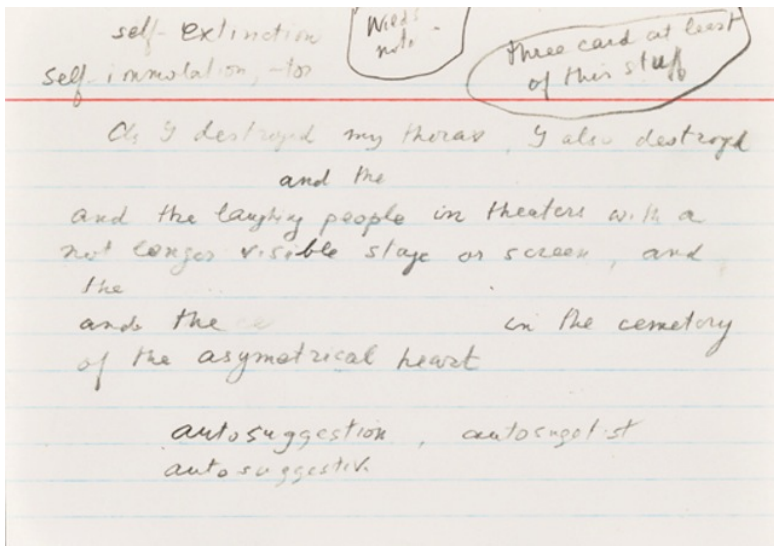
(Miscel.)
Willpower, absolute
self domination.
Electroencephalographic recordings
of the hypnotic "sleep" are very similar
to those of the waking state and quite
different from those of ~~the~~ normal sleep;
yet there are certain minute details
about the pattern of the trance which, of
extraordinary interest
and place it specifically apart both from
sleeping and the waking state.

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Miscel.

Willpower, absolute self domination.

Electroencephalographic recordings of hypnotic "sleep" are very similar to those of the waking state and quite different from those of normal sleep; yet there are certain minute details about the pattern of the trance which are of extraordinary interest and place it specifically apart both from sleep and [waking].



Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

Wild's note

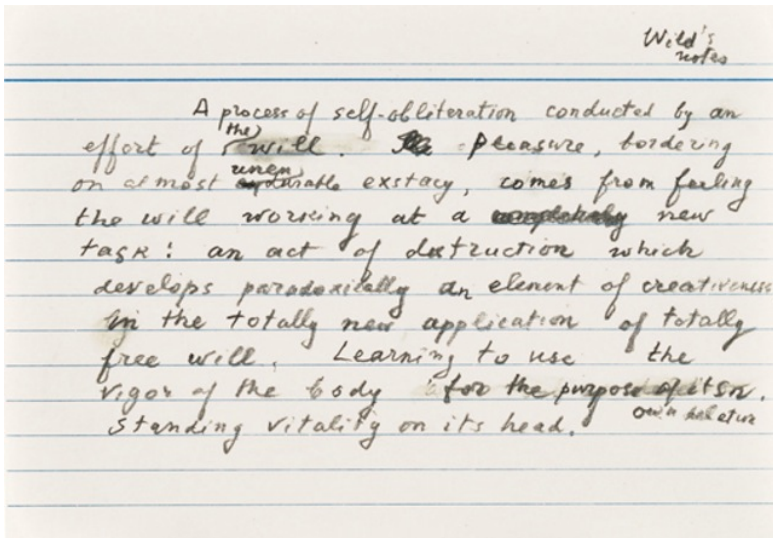
self-extinction

self-immolation, -tor

As I destroyed my thorax, I also destroyed [] and the [] and the laughing people in theaters with a not longer visible stage or screen, and the [] and the [] in the cemetery of the asym[m]etrical heart

autosuggestion, autougetist

autosuggestive



Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Wild's notes

A process of self-obliteration conducted by an effort of the will. Pleasure, bordering on almost unendurable exstasy, comes from feeling the will working at a new task: an act of destruction which develops paradoxically an element of creativeness in the totally new application of totally free will. Learning to use the vigor of the body for the purpose of its own deletion[,] standing vitality on its head.

OED

Nirvana blowing out, [extinguishing],
extinction, disappearance In Buddhist
theology extinction ... and absorption into
the supreme spirit.

[nirvanic embrace of Brahma]

bonze = Buddhist monk

bonzery, bonzeries

the doctrine of Buddhist incarnation

Brahmahood = absorption into the divine
essence.

Brahmism

[all this postulates a supreme god]

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

OED

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Buddhist theology extinction ... and absorption into the supreme spirit.

(nirvanic embrace of Brahma)

bonze = Buddhist monk

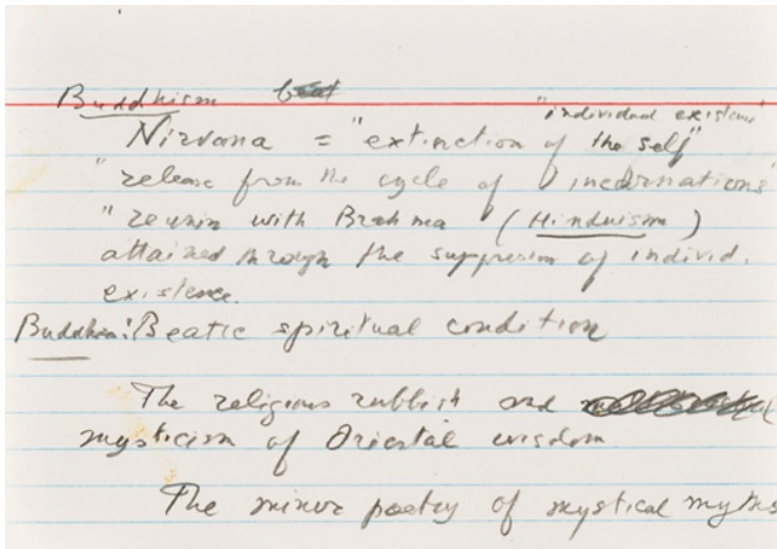
bonzery, bonzeries

the doctrine of Buddhist incarnation

Brahmahood = absorption into the divine essence.

Brahmism

(all this postulates a supreme god)



Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Buddhism

Nirvana = "extinction of the self" "individual existence"

"release from the cycle of incarnations"

"reunion with Brahma (Hinduism)"

attained through the suppression of individ[ual] existence.

Buddhism: Beatic spiritual condition

The religious rubbish and mysticism of Oriental wisdom

The minor poetry of mystical myths

Wild A

The novel Laura was sent to me by the painter Rawitch, a rejected admirer of my wife, of whom he did an exquisite oil a few years ago. The way I was led by delicate clues and ghostly nudges to the exhibition where "Lady with Fan" was sold to me by his girlfriend, a sniggering tart with gilt fingernails, is a separate anecdote in the anthology of humiliation to which, since my marriage, I have been a constant contributor. As to the book,

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

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(Wild B)

a bestseller, ^{which} the blurb described as
"a roman à clef with the clef lost for
ever", the demonic hands of one of
my servants, the Velvet Valet - as
Flora called him, kept slipping it
into my visual field until I
opened the damned thing and discovered
it to be a maddening masterpiece

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Wild B

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②

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Last §

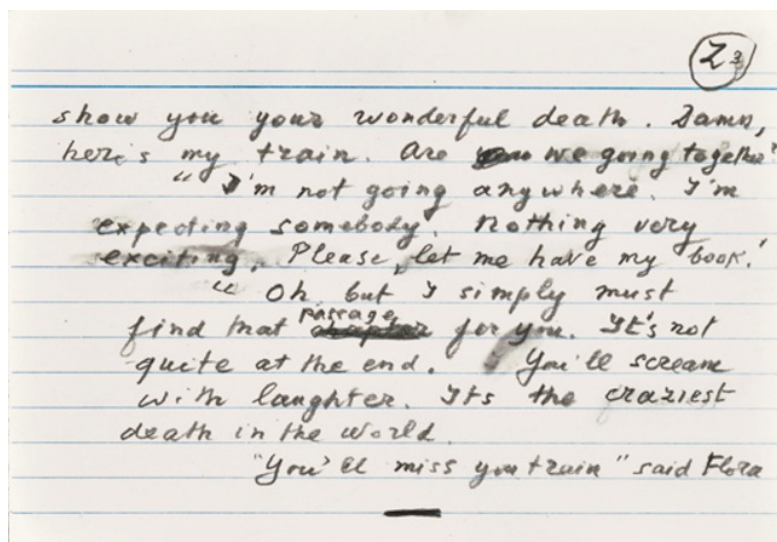
Winnie Carr waiting for her train on the station platform of Sex, a delightful Swiss resort famed for its crimson plums[,] noticed her old friend Flora on a bench near the bookstall with a paperback in her lap. This was the soft cover copy of *Laura* issued virtually at the same time as its much stouter and comelier hardback edition. She had just bought it at the station bookstall,

and in answer to Winnie's jocular remark ("hope you'll enjoy the story of your life") said she doubted if she could force herself to start reading it.

Hi-Res Image: **Front/Back**

and in answer to Winnie's jocular remark ("hope you'll enjoy the story of your life") said she doubted if she could force herself to start reading it.

Oh you must! said Winnie, it is, of course, fictionalized and all that but you'll come face to face with yourself at every other corner. And there's your wonderful death. Let me



Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

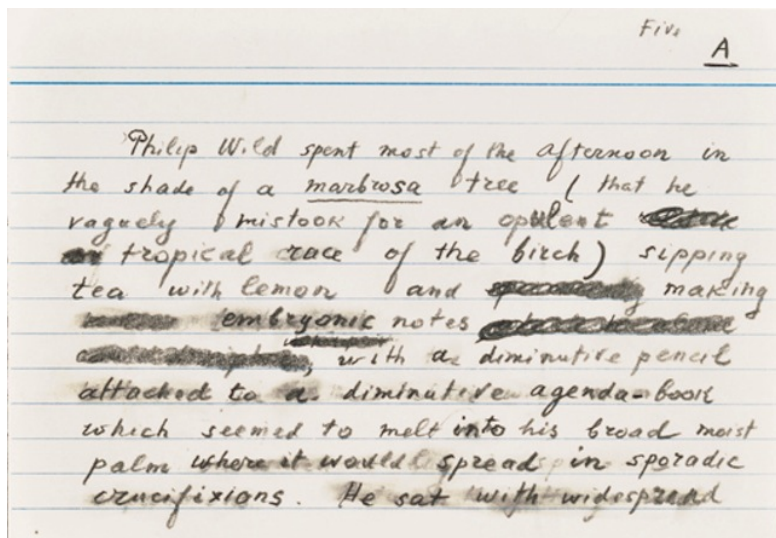
Z₃

show you your wonderful death. Damn, here's my train. Are we going together?["]

"I'm not going anywhere. I'm expecting somebody. Nothing very exciting. Please, let me have my book."

"Oh, but I simply must find that passage for you. It's not quite at the end. You'll scream with laughter. It's the craziest death in the world.["]

"You'll miss your train" said Flora



Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Five A

Philip Wild spent most of the afternoon in the shade of a marbrosa tree (that he vaguely mistook for an opulent tropical race of the birch) sipping tea with lemon and making embryonic notes with a diminutive pencil attached to a diminutive agenda-book which seemed to melt into his broad moist palm where it would spread in sporadic crucifixions. He sat with widespread

Five
B

legs to accomodate his enormous stomach and now and then checked or made in midthought half a movement to check the fly buttons of his old fashioned white trousers. There was also the recurrent search for his pencil sharpener, which he absently put into a different pocket every time after use. Otherwise, between all those ~~small~~ movements, he sat perfectly still, like a meditative idol. Flora would be often present lolling in a deckchair,

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Five B

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enclosing his chair on a ^{her progression} of strewn magazines C
 moving it from time to time, circling as it
 were around her husband, ^{and} as she sought
 an even denser shade than the one
 sheltering him. The urge to expose
 the maximum of naked flesh permitted by
 fashion was combined in her strange little
 mind with a ^{dread of the} least touch of tan ~~to~~
 defiling her ivory skin. ~~There was a certain amount of that~~
~~the man was brought as to the~~
~~the man the man about the~~
~~could be seen.~~

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

C

moving it from time to time, circling as it were around her husband, and enclosing his chair in her progression of strewn magazines as she sought an even denser shade than the one sheltering him. The urge to expose the maximum of naked flesh permitted by fashion was combined in her strange little mind with a dread of the least touch of tan defiling her ivory skin.

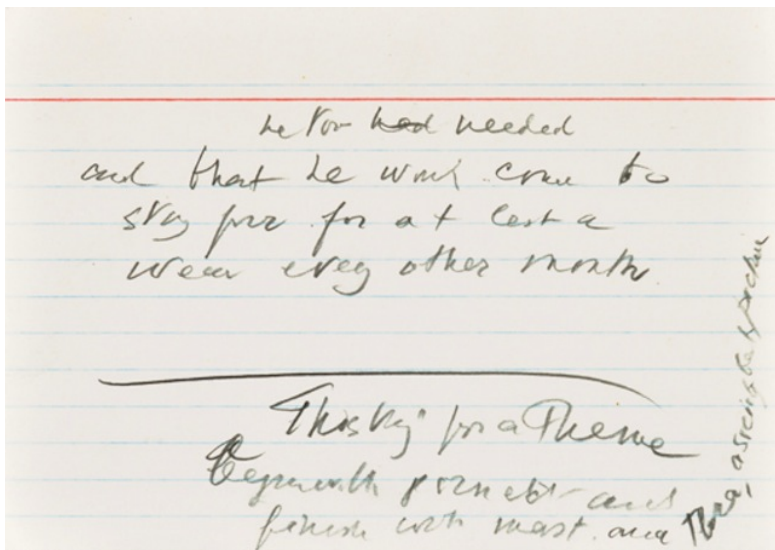
Eric's notes

To all contraceptive precautions, and indeed to orgasm at its safest and deepest, I much preferred—madly preferred—finishing off at my ease against the softest part of her thigh. This predilection might have been due to the unforgettable impact of my romps with schoolmates of different but erotically identical, sexes

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

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Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

he too needed
and that he would come to stay for for at least a week every other month

This [key] for a Theme
Begin with [poem] etc and
finish with mast and Flora, ascribe to picture

X

After a three-year separation (distant war, regular exchange of tender letters) we met again. Though still married to that hog she kept away from him and at the moment sojourned at a central European resort in eccentric solitude. We met in a splendid park that she praised with exaggerated warmth—picturesque trees, blooming meadows—and in a secluded part of it an ancient "^{rotunda} ~~parthenon~~" with pictures and music" where ~~was~~

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

X

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XX

we simply had to stop for a rest and a
bite - the sisters, I mean, ^{she said,} the attendant
there - served iced coffee and cherry
tart of quite special quality - and
as she spoke I suddenly began to
realise with a sense of utter depression
and embarrassment that the "pavillion"
was ~~the place~~ the celebrated Green Chapel
of St Esmeralda and that she was brimming with religious
fervor and yet miserably ^{desperately} fearful, despite
bright smiles and ~~an air~~ ^{an air} enjoué, of my
insulting her by some mocking remark.

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

XX

we simply had to stop for a rest and a bite—the sisters, I mean, she said, the attendant[s] there—served iced coffee and cherry tart of quite special quality—and as she spoke I suddenly began to realise with a sense of utter depression and embarrassment that the “pavillion” was the celebrated Green Chapel of St Esmeralda and that she was brimming with religious fervor and yet miserably, desperately fearful, despite bright smiles and an air enjoué, of my insulting her by some mocking remark.

The wall did not go up to the ceiling, it stopped at the
in a horizontal line at its painted verge, where the desired
slope of the white washed ceiling used to begin.

4 I hit upon the art of thinking away
my body, my being, ~~my~~ mind itself.
To think away thought—luxurious suicide,
delicious dissolution! Dissolution, in
fact, is a marvelously apt term here,
for as you sit relaxed in this
~~comfortable~~ comfortable chair (narrator striking
its armrests) and start destroying
yourself ~~gradually~~, the first thing you
feel is a mounting melting, from
the feet upward.

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

D₀

I hit upon the art of thinking away my body, my being, mind itself. To think away thought—luxurious suicide, delicious dissolution! Dissolution, in fact, is a marvelously apt term here, for as you sit relaxed in this comfortable chair (narrator striking its armrests) and start destroying yourself, the first thing you feel is a mounting melting from the feet upward

§ one

In experimenting on oneself in order to pick out the sweetest death, one cannot, obviously, set a part of one's body on fire or drain it of blood or subject it to any other drastic operation, for the simple reason that these are one-way treatments: ~~and~~ there is no resurrecting the organ one has destroyed. It is the ability to stop the experiment and return intact from the perilous journey that makes all the difference, once ~~starting~~ its mysterious technique

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Done

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has been mastered by the student of self-annihilation. From the preceding chapters and the footnotes to them, he has learned, I hope, how to put himself into neutral, i.e. into a harmless trance and how to get out of it by a resolute wrench of the watchful will. What cannot be taught is the specific method of dissolving one's body, or at least part of one's body, while tranced. A deep probe of one's darkest self, the unraveling of subjective associations, may suddenly

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

Dtwo

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D three

lead to the shadow of a clue and then to the clue itself. The only help I can provide is not even paradigmatic. For all I know, the way I found to woo death may be quite atypical; yet the story has to be told for the sake of its strange logic.

In a recurrent dream of my childhood I used to see a smudge on the wallpaper or on a whitewashed door, a nasty smudge that started to come alive,

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

Dthree

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In a recurrent dream of my childhood I used to see a smudge on the wallpaper or on a whitewashed door, a nasty smudge that started to come alive,

D_{four}

turning into a crustacean-like monster. As its appendages began to move, a thrill of foolish horror shook me awake; but the same night or the next I would be again facing idly some wall or screen on which a spot of dirt would attract the naive sleeper's attention by starting to grow and ~~beginning~~ make groping and clasping gestures — and again I managed to wake up before its bloated bulk got unstuck from the wall. But one night

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

D_{four}

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D-five

when some trick of position, some dimple
of pillow, some fold of bedclothes made
me feel brighter and braver than usual,
I let the smudge start its evolution
and, drawing on an ^{imagined} mitten, I simply
rubbed out the beast. Three or four times
it appeared again in my dreams but
now I welcomed its growing shape and
gleefully erased it. Finally it gave up
~~bothering me~~ ^{as some day} life will give up
bothering me.

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

D-five

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¶ I have never derived the least joy from my legs. In fact I strongly object to the bipedal condition. The fatter and wiser I grew the more I abominated the task of grappling with ^{long} drawers, trousers and pyjama pants. Had I been able to bear the stink and stickiness of my own unwashed body I would have slept ~~there~~ ~~sleeping~~ with all my clothes on and had ~~a~~ valets—preferably with some experience in the tailoring of corpses—~~go~~ change me, say, once a week. But then,

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Legs 1 7

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Legs (2)

I also loath ~~the~~ the proximity of valets and the vile touch of their hands. The last one I had was at least clean ~~and clean~~ but he regarded the act of dressing his master as a battle of wits, he doing his best ~~to~~ ~~to turn the wrong outside into the right inside~~ to turn the wrong outside into the right inside and I undoing his endeavors by working my right foot into my left trouser leg. Our complicated exertions, which to an onlooker might

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)Legs₂ 8

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9
Legs (3)

have seemed some sort of exotic wrestling match. would take us from one room to another and end by my sitting on the floor, exhausted and hot, with the bottom of my trousers mis-clothing my heaving abdomen.

Finally, in my sixties ^{constant} I found the right person to dress and undress me; an old illusionist who is able to ~~go~~ behind a screen in the guise of a cossack and instantly come out at the other end as

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Legs 3 9

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Legs ¹⁰ (4)

Uncle Sam. He is tasteless and rude, and altogether not a nice person, but he has taught me many a subtle trick such as ~~the~~ folding trousers properly ~~and~~ and I think I shall keep him despite the fantastic wages ~~he~~ ~~asks~~ the rascal asks.

¶

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

Legs 4 10

Uncle Sam. He is tasteless and rude and altogether not a nice person, but he has taught me many a subtle trick such as folding trousers properly and I think I shall keep him despite the fantastic wages the rascal asks.

Wild remembers

Every now and then she would turn up for a few moments between trains, between planes, between lovers. My morning sleep would be interrupted by heartrending sounds — a window opening, a little bustle downstairs, a trunk coming, a trunk going, distant telephone conversations that seemed to be conducted in conspiratorial whispers. If shivering in my nightshirt I dared to waylay her all she said would be "you really ought to lose some weight" or "I hope you transferred that money as I indicated" — and all doors closed again.

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

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Notes

the art of self-slaughter

TLS

16.1.76

" Nietzsche argued that the man of pure will ... must recognise that there is an appropriate time to die "

Philip Nikitin:

The act of suicide may be "criminal" in the same sense that murder is criminal but in my case it is purified and hallowed by ^{the} incredible delight it gives.

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

Notes

the art of self-slaughter

TLS 16-1-76 "Nietz[s]che argued that the man of pure will ... must recognise that that there is an appropriate time to die"

Philip Nikitin: The act of suicide may be "criminal" in the same sense that murder is criminal but in my case it is purified and hallowed by the incredible delight it gives.

Wild D

By now I have died up to my navel
some fifty times in less than three
years and my fifty resurrections have
shown that no damage is done to the
organs involved when breaking in time
out of the trance. ~~When~~^{As soon as} I started
yesterday to work on my torso, the
act of deletion ~~producing~~ producing an
ecstasy superior to anything experienced
before; yet I noticed that the ecstasy
was accompanied by a new feeling of
anxiety and even panic. (more)

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

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¶ How curious to recall the trouble I had in finding an adequate spot for my first experiments. There was an old swing hanging from a branch of an old oaktree in a corner of the garden. Its ropes looked sturdy enough; ~~and~~ its seat was provided with a comfortable safety bar of the kind inherited nowadays by chair lifts. It had ^{been} much used ~~by~~ ^{years ago by my half sister} ~~my half sister~~, a fat dreamy pigtailed creature who died before reaching puberty. I now had to take a ladder to it, for the sentimental

Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

0

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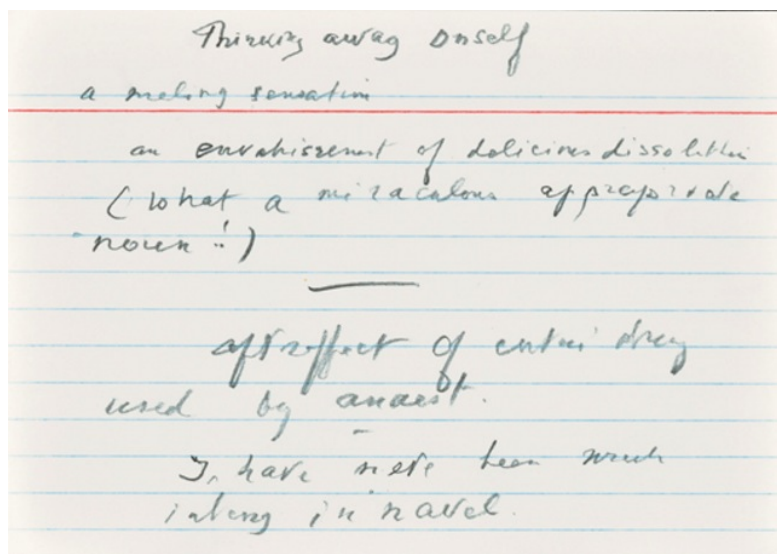
00-

relic ~~was lifted~~ ^{was lifted} out of ^{human} reach
 by the growth of the picturesque
 but completely indifferent tree. I
 had glided with a slight oscillation
 into the initial stage of a particularly
 rich trance when the cordage
 burst and I was hurled, still more
 or less boxed ^{into a} ditch full of brambles
 which ripped off a piece of
 the peacock blue dressing gown I
 happened to be wearing that summer day.

Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

00

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Hi-Res Image: [Front](#)/[Back](#)

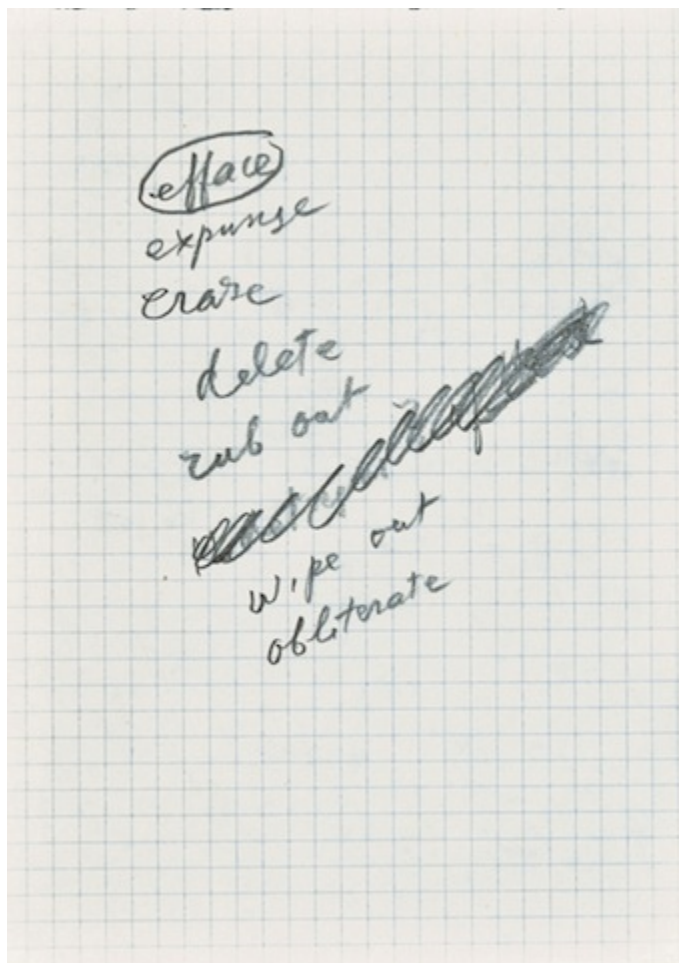
Thinking away on[e]self

a mel[t]ing sensation

an envahissement of delicious dissolution (what a miraculous appropriate noun!)

aftereffect of certain drug used by anaest[hesiologist]

I have ne[ver] been much [interested] in navel



Hi-Res Image: [Front/Back](#)

efface
expunge
erase
delete
rub out
wipe out
obliterate

The Original of Laura

Ch. One

Her husband, she answered, was a writer, too - at least, after a fashion. Fat men beat their wives, it is said, and he certainly looked fierce, when he caught her ziffing ~~him~~ through his papers. He pretended to slam down a marble paperweight and crush this weak little hand (displaying the little hand in febrile motion). Actually she was searching for ~~a~~ silly business letter, - and not ^{in the least} trying to decipher his mysterious



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

manuscript. Oh no, it was not a ^{work of fiction} ~~novel~~ (2)

^{which} ~~that~~ one dashes off, you know, to make money; it was a mad neurologist's ~~concoction~~ testament, a kind of Poisonous Opus as in that film. It had cost him, ~~the price of~~ ~~the price of~~ and would still cost him, years of toil, but ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{thing} was of course, an absolute secret. If she mentioned it at all, she added, it ~~was~~ ^{was} because ~~she was drunk~~. She wished to be taken home or preferably to some cool quiet place with a clean bed and room service. She wore a strapless gown



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

and slippers of black velvet. Her bare insteps were as white as her young shoulders. The party seemed to have degenerated into a lot of sober eyes staring at her with nasty compassion from every corner, every cushion and ashtray, and even from the hills of the ~~landscape~~ ~~front~~ spring night framed in the open french window. Mrs. Carr, her hostess, repeated what a pity it was that Philip could not come or rather that Flora could not have induced



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

him to come! I'll drag him ~~and~~
~~out~~ next time said Flora,

(4)

~~in the room, Flora~~
~~was~~ rummaging all around
her seat for her small formless vanity
bag, a blind black puppy. Here it is,
cried an anonymous girl, squatting
quickly.

Mrs Carr's nephew, Anthony Carr,
and his wife Winny, ^{one of those} ~~mere~~ ~~pleasant~~
~~pleasant~~ easy going, over-generous
couple that positively ~~care~~ ^{are} to
lend their flat to a friend, ^{any friend,} when
they and their ~~own~~ dog do not happen



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

(5)

to need it. Flora spotted at once ~~the~~
~~the alien~~ creams in the bathroom and the
open can of Fido's Feast next to the
~~pared~~ cheese in the cluttered fridge.
A brief set of interactions (~~conversations~~
~~¶~~ (pertaining to the superintendent and the chairman
~~standing~~) ended on: "Ring up my aunt Emily Carr,"
which evidently had been already done
to lamentation in Heaven and laughter
in Hell. The double bed was made
but was unfresh inside. With
comic fastidiousness Flora spread



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

(6)

her furcoat over it ~~expectation~~
before undressing and lying down.
Then Where was the damned valise
that ^{had been} brought up earlier? ~~expectation~~
In the vestibule closet. Had everything
to be shaken out before the pair
of morocco slippers could be located
factually folded in their zippered
pouch? Hiding under the
shaving kit. All the towels in the
bathroom, whether pink or green, were
of a thick, soggy-looking, spongy-like texture.



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

copy out again

(7)

Let us choose the smallest. On the way ^{back} ~~out~~
the distal edge of the right slipper lost
its grip and had to be ^{at} ~~placed~~ ^{the grateful heel}
^{with a finger for shoeing-horn.}
no quotes
no comma ¶ Oh, hurry up, she said softly
¶ That first surrender of hers
was a little sudden, if not downright
unnerving. A pause for some light
caresses, concealed embarrassment,
feigned amusement, prefatory contemplation.
~~Her companion was not without~~
~~the same qualities. She was~~
~~not without the same~~



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

(8)

an extravagantly slender girl. Her ribs showed. The conspicuous knobs of her hip bones framed a hollowed abdomen, so flat as to belie the notion of « belly ». Her exquisite bone structure immediately slipped into a novel - became in fact the secret structure of that novel, besides supporting a number of poems. The cup-sized breasts of that twenty-four year old impatient beauty seemed a dozen years younger than she, with those pale squinty ripples and firm form.



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

(9)

Her painted eyelids were closed. A tear of no particular meaning ~~adorned~~ gemmed the hard top of her cheek. Nobody could tell what went on in that little head. Waves of desire rippled there, a recent lover fell back in a swoon, hygienic doubts were raised and dismissed, contempt for everyone but herself ~~was~~ advertised with a flush of warmth, its constant presence, here it is, tried what's her name squatting quickly, my darling, dushka moye (eyebrows ~~are raised and eyebrows~~)

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

went up, eyes opened and closed again, she didn't meet Russians often, this should be pondered.)

¶ Masking her face, coating her side, pinching her stomach with kisses — all very acceptable while they remained dry.

¶ Her frail, docile frame when turned over by hand revealed new marvels — the mobile omoplates of a child being tubbed, the incurvation of a ballerina's spine, narrow nates



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

(11)

of an ambiguous irresistible charm (nature's
beastliest bluff, said Paul de G watching
a dour old don watching boys
bathing)

Only by identifying her with
an unwritten, half-written, rewritten
difficult book could one hope to
render at last what ~~the~~

~~the~~
~~the~~
~~the~~



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

(12)

contemporary descriptions of intercourse
so seldom convey, because newborn and
thus generalized, ~~in~~ in the sense of primitive
organisms of art as opposed to
the personal achievement of great
English poets dealing with
an evening in the country, a bit of
sny in a river, the nostalgia of
remote sounds - things utterly ^{beyond the} ~~reach~~
(reach) of Homer or Horace. Readers are
directed to that look-on a very
high shelf, in a very bad light - but



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

already existing, as magic exists, and death, and as shall exist, from now on, the mouth she made automatically while using ~~that towel~~ that towel to wipe her thighs after the promised withdrawal.

A copy of Glist's dreadful "Glandscape" (receding ovals) adorned the wall. Vital and serene, according to philistine Flora. ~~Auroral~~ Auroral rumbles and bangs had begun jolting the cold misty city.

She consulted the ~~only~~ eye on her wrist. It was too tiny and not



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

costly enough for its size to go right, she said (translating from Russian) and it ~~was~~ ^{was} the first time in ~~her~~ ^{her} stormy life that ~~it was~~ ^{she knew} anyone took of his watch to make love. But I'm sure it is sufficiently late to ring up another fellow (stretching her swift cool arm toward the bedside telephone)."

¶ She who mislaid everything dialled fluently a long number

"You were asleep? I've shattered your sleep? That's what you



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

deserve. Now listen carefully." And with tigerish zest, monstrously magnifying a trivial tiff she had had with him whose pyjamas (the idiot subject of the tiff) were changing the while, in the spectrum of his surprise and distress, from heliotrope to a sickly gray, she dismissed the poor oaf for ever.

"That's done, she said, resolutely replacing the receiver. Was's game now for another round, she wanted to know."



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

(16)

No? Not even a quickie? Well, tant pis.
Try to find me some liquor in their kitchen,
and then take ^{me} home.

¶ The position of her head, its trustful
proximity, its gratefully shouldered
weight, the tickle of her hair, endured
all through the drive; yet ~~to~~
~~because~~ she was not asleep
and with the greatest exactitude had
the taxi stop to let her out ~~at~~
~~at~~ at the corner of Heine street,
not too far from, nor too close to, her



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

house. This was an old villa backed by tall trees. In the shadows of a side alley a ^{young man} ~~man~~ with a mackintosh over his white pyjamas was wringing his hands. The street lights were going out in alternate order, the odd numbers first. Along the pavement in front of the villa her obese husband, in a rumpled black suit and tartan booties with clasps, was walking a striped cat on an overlong leash. She made for the front door.



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Her husband followed, now carrying the cat. The scene might be called somewhat incongruous. The animal seemed naïvely fascinated by the snake trailing behind on the ground.

¶¶¶ Not wishing to harness herself to futurity, she declined to discuss another rendez-vous. To prod her slightly, a messenger called at her domicile three days later. He brought from the favorite florist of fashionable girls a banal berry ~~which she had never seen before~~



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

(19)

of bird-of-paradise flowers. Cora, the mulatto chambermaid, who let him in, surveyed the shabby courier, his comic cap, his wan countenance with it three days growth of blond beard, and was about to ^{raise her chin and} embrace his rustling lord but he said "No, I've been ordered to give this to madame herself" "You French?" asked scornful Cora (the whole scene was pretty artificial in a fishy theatrical way). He shook his head - and here



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Madame appeared from the breakfast room. First of all she dismissed Cora with the strelitzias (hateful blooms, regalized bananas, really).

"Look," she said to the beaming bum, "if you ever repeat this idiotic performance, I will never see you again. I swear I won't! In fact, I have a great mind —" He flattened her against the wall between his outstretched arms; Flora ducked, and freed herself, and showed him the door; but the telephone was already ringing ~~ecstatically~~ ^{ecstatically} when he reached his lodgings.



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Her grandfather, the painter Lev Linde, emigrated in 1920 from Moscow to New York with his wife Eva and his son Adam. He also brought over a large collection of his landscapes, either unsold or loaned to him by kind friends and ignorant institutions — ^{pictures that} ~~they~~ were said to be the glory of Russia, ~~and~~ the pride of the people. How many times art albums had reproduced those meticulous masterpieces — clearings [^] in pine woods, with a bear cub or two, and brown brooks between thawing snow-banks, and the vastness of ~~barren~~ purple heaths!



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Two (2)

Native "decadents" had been calling them
"calendar tripe" for the last three decades
~~and~~; yet ^{Linde} had always had ~~the~~
an army of stout admirers; ~~the~~ mighty few
of them turned up at his exhibitions in
America. Very soon a number of
~~the most valuable~~ unconsolable oils found
themselves being shipped back to Moscow, while
another batch moped in rented
flats before tramping up to ~~the~~ the attic
or creeping down to the market stall.

¶ What can be sadder than a discouraged



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Two (3)

artist dying not from his own commonplace
maladies, but from the cancer of
oblivion invading his once famous "pictures
such as "April in Yalta" or "The Old
Bridge". Let us not dwell on the
choice of the wrong place of exile. Let
us not linger at that pitiful bedside.

¶ His son Adam Lind (he dropped the
last letter on the tacit advice of a misprint
in a catalogue) was more successful. By the age
of thirty he ^{he had become} ~~was~~ a fashionable photographer.
He married the ballerina Lenskaya,

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Two (4)

a delightful dancer, though with something fragile and gauche about her that kept her teetering on a narrow ledge between benevolent recognition and the rave reviews ~~deservedly~~^{of} nonentities. Her first lovers belonged mostly to the Union of Property Movers, ~~not~~ simple fellows of Polish extraction, but Flora was probably ~~Adam's~~ Adam's daughter. Three years after her birth Adam discovered that the boy he loved had strangled ~~another~~ another, unattainable, boy

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Two (5)

whom he loved even more. Adam Lind had always had an inclination for trick photography and this time, before shooting himself in a Montecarlo hotel (on the night, sad to ~~say~~^{relate} of his wife's very real success in Pike's "Narcisse et Narcette"), he geared and focussed his camera in a corner of the drawing room ~~enough~~ so ~~enough~~ as to record the event from different angles. These automatic pictures of his last moments and of a table's lion-paws did not come out to well; but his widow



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

easily sold them for the price of a flat in Paris to the local magazine Pitch which specialized in soccer and diabolical farts-divers.

It With her ~~daughter~~ little daughter, an English governess, a Russian nanny, and a cosmopolitan lover, she settled in Paris, then moved to Florence, sojourned in London and returned to France. Her art was not strong enough to survive the loss of good looks ^{as well as} a certain ~~woolens~~ ^{woolens} ~~flaw~~ ^{flaw} in her pretty but too prominent right omoplate, and by the ~~months~~



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

age of forty or so we find her reduced to giving dancing lessons at a not quite first-rate school in Paris.

¶ Her glamorous ~~Lovers~~ were now replaced by an elderly but still vigorous Englishman ~~Englishman~~ who sought abroad a refuge from taxes and ^a convenient place to conduct his not quite legal transactions in the traffic of wines. He was what used to be termed a charmeur. His name, no doubt assumed, was ~~Hubert H.~~ Hubert.

¶ Flora, a lovely child, as she said



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Two (8)

herself with a slight shake (dreamy? ~~incredulous~~
incredulous?) of her head every time she
spoke of those prepubescent years, had
a gray home life marred by ill health,
~~loneliness~~ and boredom. Only some very
expensive, super-Oriental doctor with long
gentle fingers could have analyzed her
nightly dreams of erotic tortures in
so called "labs", major and minor
laboratories with red curtains. She did
not remember her father and rather disliked
her mother. She was often alone in



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Two (9)

the horse with Mr. Hubert, who constantly "prowled" (rodait) around her, humming a monotonous tune and sort of mesmerising her, enveloping her, so to speak in some sticky invisible substance and coming closer and closer no matter what way she turned. For instance, she did not dare to let her arms hang aimlessly lest her knuckles came into contact with some horrible part of that kindly but smelly and "pushing" old ~~man~~ male.



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

(her)

Two 10

He told stories about his sad life, he told her about his daughter who was just like her, same age - twelve - , same eyelashes - darker than the dark blue ^{of the} eyes, same ~~hair~~ hair, blondish or rather palemino, and so silky - if he could be allowed to stroke it, or P'effleurier des lercies, like this, that's all, thank you. Poor Daisy had been crushed to death by a backing lorry on a country road - short cut home from school -



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

through a muddy construction site - abominable
 tragedy - her mother ^{did} of a broken heart.
 Mr. Hubert, ^{sat} ~~sat~~ ^{on} ~~on~~ ^{flashed} and nodded
 his bald head ^{acknowledging} all the ⁱⁿoffences of life, and
 wiped his eyes with a violet ~~handkerchief~~
 handkerchief which turned orange - a
 little parlor trick - when he stuffed ^{it} back
 into his heart-pocket, and continued to
 nod ~~nodded~~ as he tried to adjust
 his thick outsole to a pattern of
 the carpet. He looked now like a
 not too successful conjuror paid to tell



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Two (12)

fairytale to a sleepy child at bedtime, but he sat a little too close. Flora wore a nightgown with short sleeves copied from that of the Montglas de Sancerre girl, ~~hardly more delicate~~ a very sweet and depraved schoolmate, who taught her where to kick an enterprising gentleman.

A week or so later Flora happened to be laid up with a chest cold. The mercury went up to 38° in the late afternoon and she complained of a dull buzz



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

in the temples. Mrs Lind cursed the old housemaid for buying asparagus instead of Asperin and hurried to the pharmacy herself. Mr Hubert had brought his pet a thoughtful present: a miniature chess set ("she knew the moves") with tickly-looking little holes bored in the squares to admit and grip the red and white pieces; the pin-sized pawns penetrated easily, but the slightly larger noblemen had to be forced in with an enervating joggle. The pharmacy was perhaps closed



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Two (14)

and she had to go to the one next to the church
or else she had met some friend of hers
in the street and would never return. A
fourfold smell - tobacco, sweat, rum
and bad teeth - emanated from poor
old harmless Mr Hubert, it was
all very pathetic. His fat porous nose with
red nostrils full of hair nearly touched her
bare throat as he helped to prop the
pillows behind her shoulders, and ^{the} muddy road
was again, was for ever a short cut between
here and school, between school and death,



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

with Daisy's bicycle wobbling in the indelible fog. She, too, had "known the moves" and had loved the en passant trick as one loves a new toy, but it cropped up so seldom, though he tried to prepare those magic positions where the ghost of a pawn ^{can be} captured on the square it has crossed.

Fera, however, turns games of skill into ^{the} stuff of nightmares. After a few minutes of play Flora grew tired of it, put a cork in her mouth, rejected it,



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

clowning dully. She pushed the board away and Mr. Hubert carefully removed it to the chair that supported the tea things. Then, with a father's sudden concern, he said "I'm afraid you are chilly, my love," and plunging a hand under the bedclothes from his vantage point at the footboard, he felt her skins. Flora uttered a yelp and then a few screams. Freeing themselves from the tumbled sheets her pedalling legs hit him ⁱⁿ the crotch. As he lurched aside, the teapot, a saucer of raspberry jam,



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

an several tiny chessmen joined in the silly
fray. Mrs Lind who had just returned and
was sampling some grapes she had bought,
heard the screams and the crash and
arrived at a dancer's run. She soothed
the absolutely furious, deeply insulted
Mr Hubert before scolding her daughter.
He was a dear man, and his life lay
in ruins all around him. He wanted
to marry her, saying she was the image
of ^{the} young actress who had been his wife,
and indeed to judge by the photographs



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

she, Madame Lanskaya, did resemble
~~her mother, poor Daisy's mother.~~

If there is little to be added about the
~~last~~ incidental, but not unattractive
Mr Hubert H. Hubert. He ~~lived~~ ^{lodged for} another
happy year in that cosy house and
died of a stroke in a hotel lift
after a business dinner. Going up,
one would like to surmise.

— . —



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Flora was barely fourteen when she lost her virginity to a coeval, a handsome ballboy at the Carlton Courts in Cannes. Three or four broken porch steps - which was all that remained of an ornate public toilet or some ancient temple - smothered in mints and campanulas and surrounded by junipers, ~~formed~~ the site of a duty she had resolved to ^{perform} ~~perform~~ ~~than~~ ~~of~~ a casual pleaser. She was now ^{rather} learning to taste. She observed with quiet interest the difficulty Jules had of drawing a junior-size sheath over an



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Three ②

organ that looked ^{abnormally} stout and had a head ^{at full erection} turned somewhat askew as if wary of ~~receiving a~~ ^{receiving a} backhand slap at the decisive moment. Flora let ~~himself~~ ^{Gules do} everything he desired except kiss her on the ~~ear~~ ^{ear} of mouth, and the only words ~~uttered~~ said referred to the next assignation. ~~and he forgot everything~~

↑ One evening after a hard day of picking up and tossing balls and pattering in a crouch across court between the rallies of a long tournament the poor boy, stinking more than usual, pleaded



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Three (3)

utter exhaustion and suggested going to a movie instead of making love; whereupon she walked away through the high heather and never saw Jules again - except when taking her tennis lessons with the ^{stodgy} old Basque in uncreased white trousers who had coached players in Odessa before World War One and still retained his effortless exquisite style.

7) Back in Paris, Flora found new lovers. With a gifted youngster from the Lanscay school and another



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

eager, more or less interchangeable couple
she would bicycle through the Blue Fountains
Forest to a romantic refuge where a
sparkle of broken glass or a lace-edged
rag on the moss were the only signs of
an earlier period of literature. A doubtless
September maddened the crickets. The girls
would compare the dimensions of their companions.
Exchanges would ^{be} enjoyed with giggles
and cries of surprise. Games of blindman's
buff would be played in the buff. Sometimes
a voyeur would be shaven out of a
tree by the vigilant police.



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Three (5)

¶ This is Flora of the close-set dark-blue ~~eyes~~ eyes and cruel mouth recollecting in her midtwenties fragments of her past, with details lost or put back in the wrong order, ~~TAIL~~ between ~~DELTA~~ and ~~SLIT~~, on dusty dim shelves, this is she. Everything about her is bound to remain blurry, even her name which seems to have been made expressly to have another one modelled upon it by a fantastically lucky artist. Of art, of love, of the

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Tree (6)

difference between dreaming and waking she
knew nothing but would have darted
at you like a flatheaded blue serpent if
you questioned her ~~knowledge~~ of dreaming.

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

she returned and Mass.
with her mother and Mr. Sutton who
Mr. Esposito she was born
and now was
to college in town
valued at 100,000

Tree (7)

at eleven she had read a quor
zerent les ~~des~~ enfants, by a
certain Dr Freud, a madman.

St Louis d'Ex
The extract came in a ~~perce~~
serie of ^{great} ~~Les~~ ^{representat} de notre époque
though why ^{great} ~~represent~~ wrote
so badly ~~remend~~ ^{was} a mystery

A blank sheet of lined paper, likely from a notebook or a form. It features a red horizontal line near the top, creating a header area. Below this line are several blue horizontal ruling lines. The paper is enclosed in a dashed rectangular border.

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

A sweet Japanese girl, who took ^{and French} Russian because her stepfather was half-French, and half-Russian, taught Flora to paint her left hand up to the radial artery (one of the tenderest areas of her beauty) with minuscule information, in so called "fairy" script, regarding names, dates and ideas. Both cheats had more French, than Russian; ^{but} in the latter the possible questions formed, as it were, a benal bouquet of probabilities: ~~which was the~~



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Ex 8

Kind of in Rus?

What folklore preceded poetry; speak a little of ~~about~~ Lom. and Serzh.; paraphrase T's letter to E.O.; what does T's doctor deplore ^{about} the temperature of his own hands when preparing to ^{his} patient? such was the information ^{demanded by} the Professor of Russian Literature (a forlorn looking man bored to extinction by his subject). As to the lady who taught French Literature all she needed were the names of modern French writers and their listing on Flora's palm caused a much denser tickle. Especially memorable



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

was the cluster of interlocked names on the ball of Flora's thumb: Malraux, Mauriac, Maurois, Michaux, Michima, Montherland, ^{and} Morand. What amazes one is not the alliteration (a joke on the part of the mannered alphabet); not the inclusion of a foreign performer (a joke on the part of that fun-loving little Japanese girl who would twist her limbs into a pretzel when entertaining Flora's Lesbian friends); and not even the fact that ~~virtually~~ all those writers were stunning mediocrities



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

as writers go (the first in the list being the worst); what amazes one is that they were supposed ~~to~~ ~~be the best of the century~~ to "represent an era" and that ~~the~~ such representants ~~could~~ could get away with the most execrable writing, provided they represent their times.



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Chapter Four

Four (1)

9 Mrs. Lanskaya died on the day her daughter graduated from Sutton College. A new fountain had just been bequeathed to its campus by a former student, the widow of a shah. Generally speaking, one should carefully preserve the transliteration the feminine ending of a Russian surname (such as -aya, instead of the masculine -iy or -oy) when the woman in question is an artistic celebrity. So let it be "Lanskaya" — land and sky and the melancholy echo



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Four (2)

of her dancing name. The fountain took quite a time to get correctly erected after an initial series of unevenly spaced spasms. The potentate had been potent till the absurd age of eighty. It was a very hot day with its blue somewhat veiled. A few photographs moved among the crowd as indifferent to it as specters doing their spectral job. And certainly for no earthly reason does this passage resemble in rhythm another novel,

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

My Laura, where the mother appears as "Maya Umanakaya", a fabricated film actress.

Anyway, she suddenly collapsed on the lawn in the middle of the beautiful ceremony. A remarkable picture commemorated the event in "File". It showed Flora kneeling belatedly in the act of taking her mother's non-existent pulse, and it also showed a man of great corpulence and fame, still unacquainted with Flora: he stood just behind her, head bared and bowed, staring at the white of her



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Four (4)

legs under her black gown and at the
fair hair under her academic cap.

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

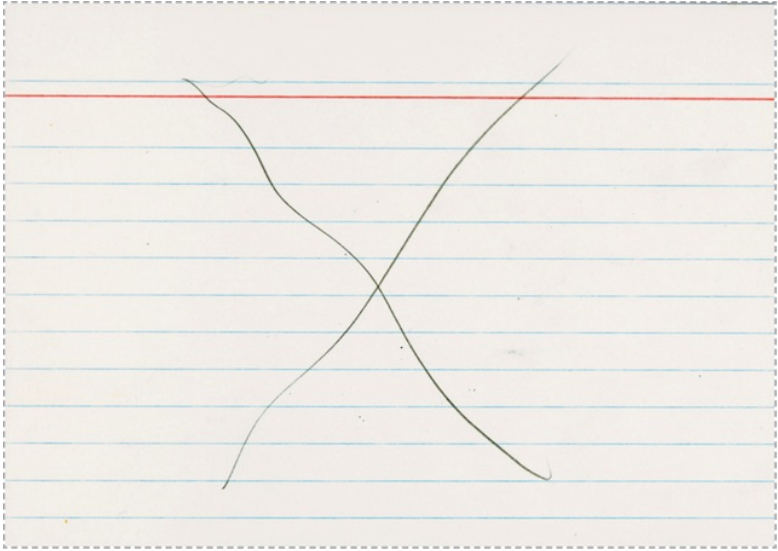
Chapter Five

¶ A brilliant neurologist, a renowned lecturer, a gentleman of independent means, Dr. Philip Wild had everything save an attractive exterior. However, one soon got over the shock of seeing that enormously fat creature mince toward the lectern on ridiculously small feet and of hearing the cock-a-doodle sound with which he cleared his throat before starting to enchant one with his wit. Laura disregarded the wit but was mesmerized by his fame and fortune.

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[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

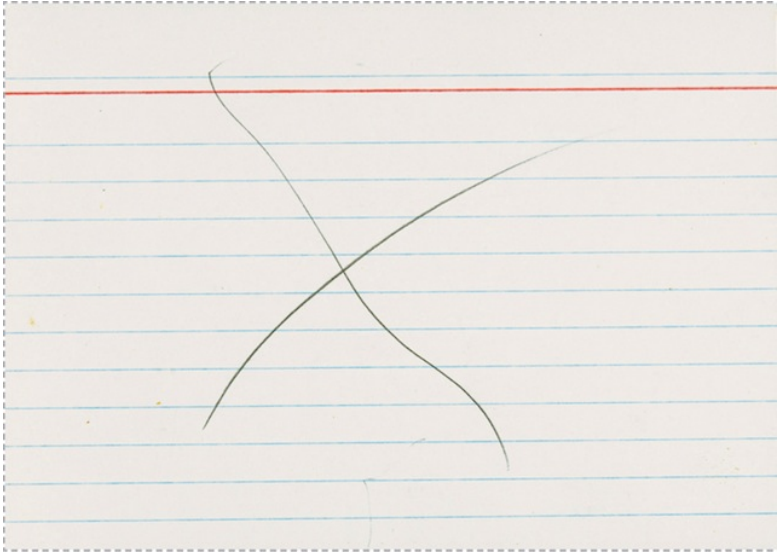
¶ Fans were back that summer - the summer she made up her mind that the eminent Philip Wild, P.H., would marry her. She had just opened a boutique d'éventails with another Sutton coed and the Polish artist Rawitch, pronounced by some Raw Itch, by her Raki Witch. Black fans and violet ones, fans like orange sunbursts, painted fans with clubtailed chinese butterflies oh they were a great hit, and one day Wild came and bought five (five spreading out her own fingers like pleats)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

for "two aunts and three nieces" who did not really exist, but never mind, it was an unusual extravagance on his part. His shyness surprised and amused Phaura.

¶ Less amusing surprises awaited her. To-day after three years of marriage she had enough of his fortune and fame. He was a domestic miser. His New Jersey house was absurdly understaffed. The rancho in Arizona had not been redecorated for years. The villa on the

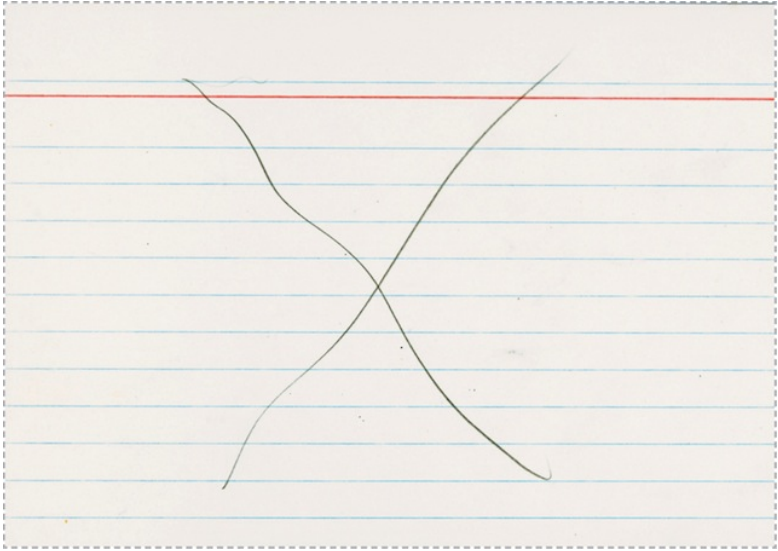


[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Five 4

Riviera had no swimming pool and only one bathroom. When she started to change all that, he would emit a kind of mild creak or squeak, and his brown eyes brimmed with sudden tears.

9

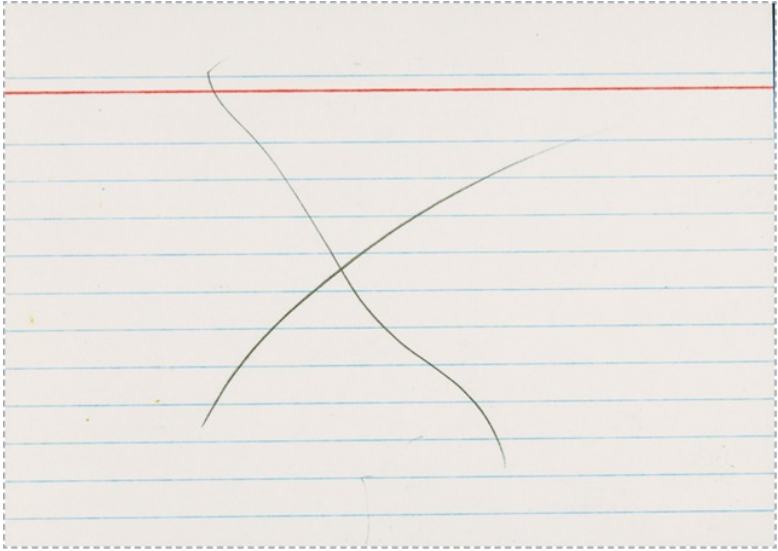


[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

~~Chapman~~

Five (5)

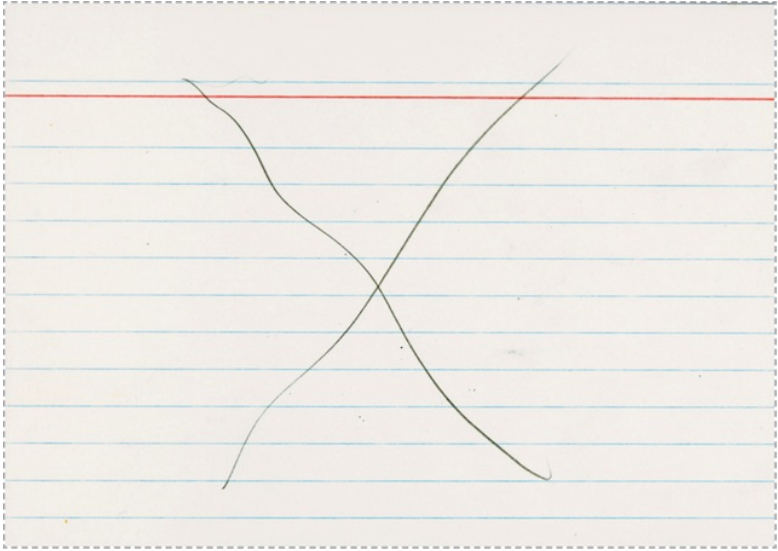
She saw their travels in terms of
adverts and a long talcum-white beach with
the tropical breeze tossing the palms and her hair;
he saw it ⁱⁿ terms of forbidden foods,
frittered away time, and ghastly expenses.



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

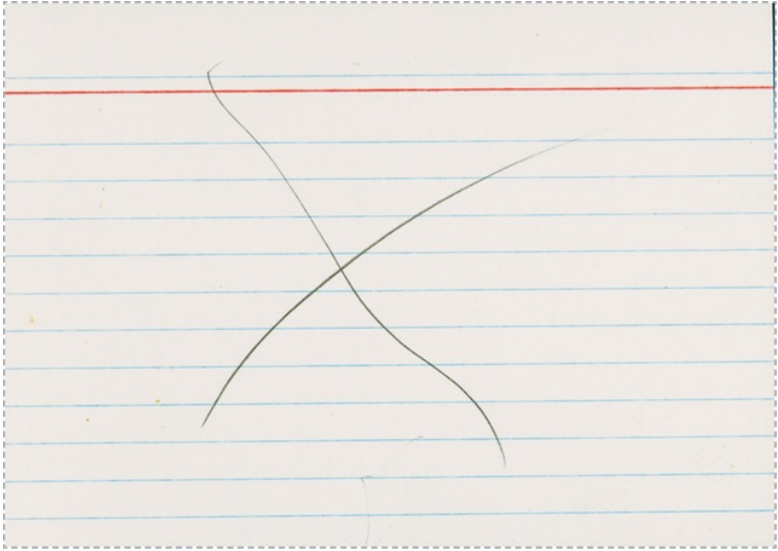
chapter ~~two~~

The novel ^{My ~~novel~~} Laura was begun very soon after the end of the love affair it depicts, was completed in one year and published three months later. And promptly ~~torn apart~~ by a book reviewer in a leading newspaper. It grimly survived and to the accompaniment of muffled grunts on the part of the librarians' fates, its invisible hoisters, it wriggled up to the top of the bestsellers' list then started to slip, but stopped at a midway step in the vortical ice: a dozen



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Sundays passed and one had the impression that Laura had somehow got stuck on the seventh step (the last respectable one) or that, perhaps, some anonymous agent working for the author was buying up every week just enough copies to keep Laura there; but a day came when the climber above lost his foothold and toppled down dislodging number seven and eight and nine and a general collapse beyond any hope of recovery.



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

¶ The "Y" of the book is ~~characterized~~
a neurotic and hesitant man of letters,
who destroys his mistress in the act of
portraying her. Statically - if one can
put it that way - the portrait is a faithful
one. Such fixed details as her trick of
opening her mouth when towel^{ing} her inguen
or of closing her eyes when smelling ^{an inodorous} rose
are absolutely true to the original.

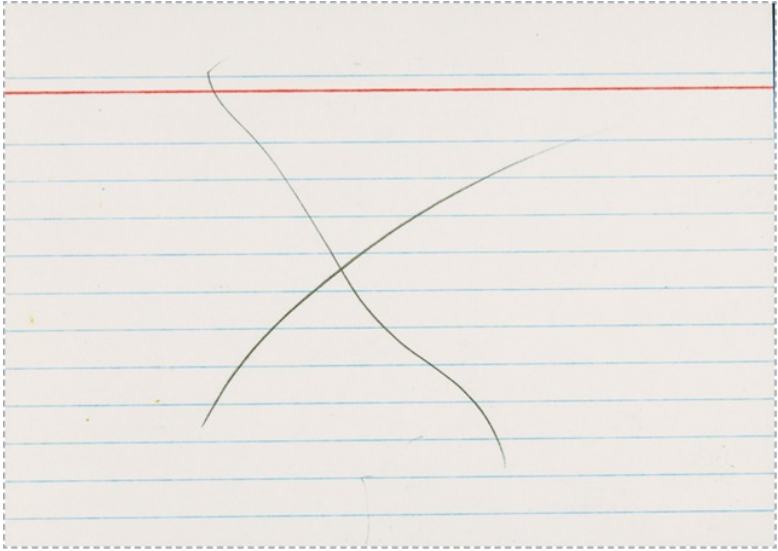
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[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Similarly

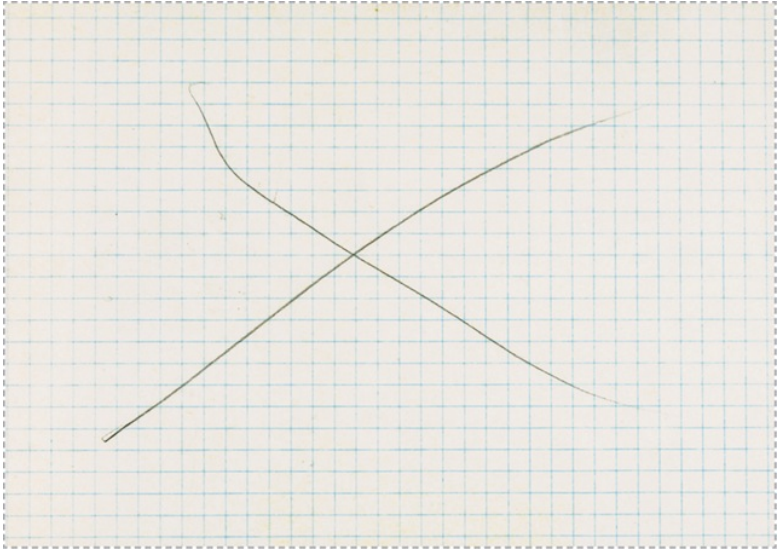
sparse prose of the author
with its pruning of rich
adjectives

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Philip Wild read "Laura" where
he is sympathetically depicted as a convinced
"great scientist" and though not a single
physical trait is mentioned, comes out
with astounding classical clarity.
under the name of ~~Philip~~ Philidor Sauvage
1821



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Tues Dec 18 75

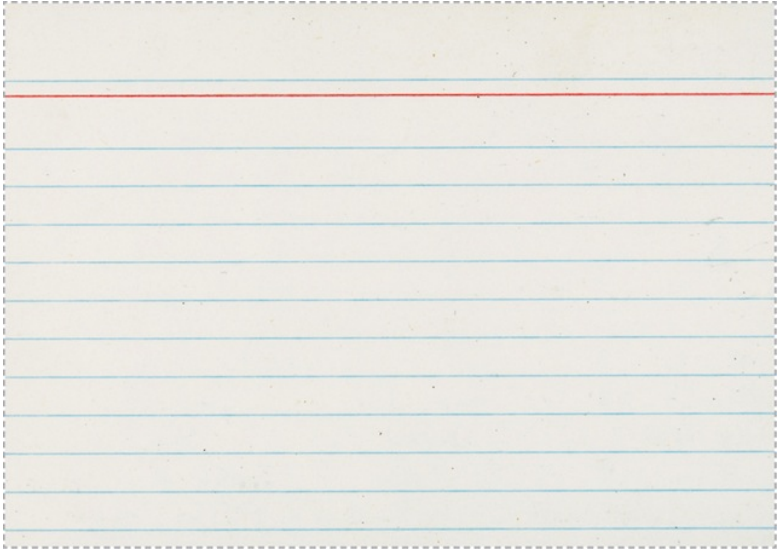
find substitute
form for enkephalin

"An ^[c?] ~~enkephalin~~ present in the brain
has now been produced synthetically." "It is
like morphine and other opiate drugs"
Further research will show how and why
"morphine has for centuries produced relief
from pain and feelings of euphoria."

[invent tradename, e.g. cephalopium]

[I thought thought to mimic an
^{imperial} awesome medicine
~~science~~ neurotransmitter carrying
my order of self destruction
to my ~~brain~~ brain. Suicide made
a pleasure,

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



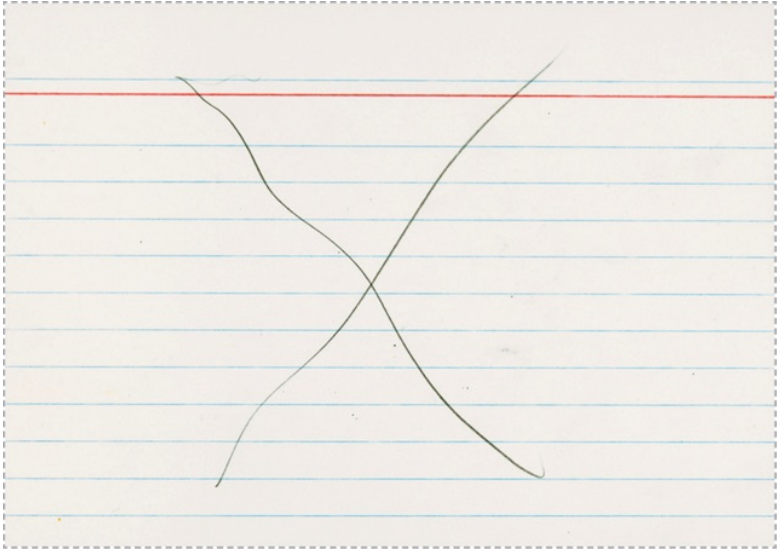
[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Bo-

8 its tempting emptiness

~~Bo-~~
Bo-

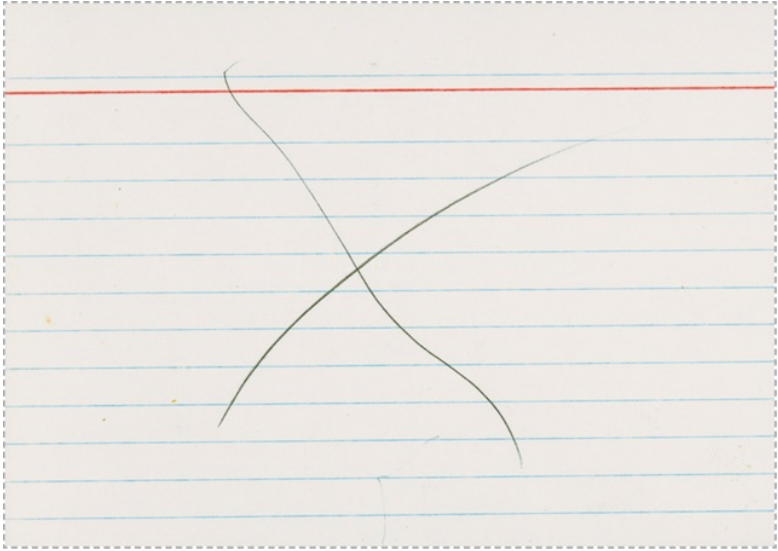
[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

The student who desires to die should learn first of all to project a mental image of himself upon his inner blackboard. This surface which at its virgin best has a dark-plum, rather than black, depth of opacity is none other than the underside of one's closed eyelids.

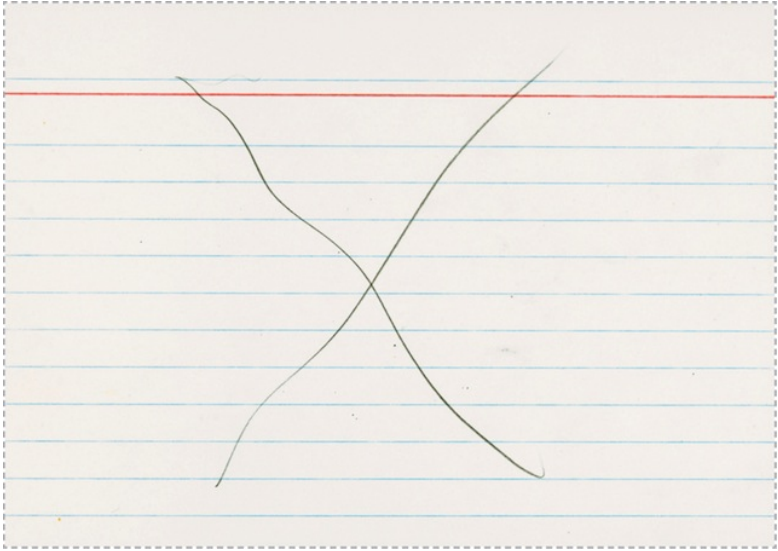
¶ To ensure a complete smoothness of background, care must be taken to eliminate the hypnagogic gargoyles and entoptic swarms which plague tired



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

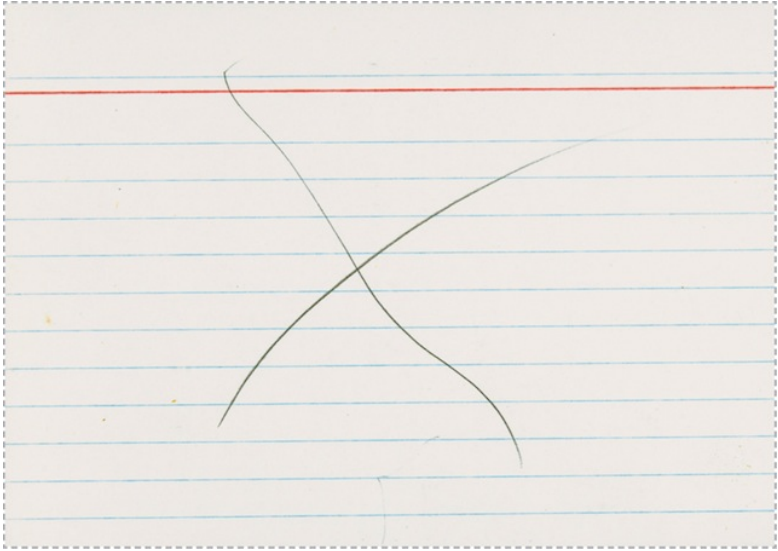
vision after ~~looking~~ ^(ch.) in a surfeit of
poring over a collection of coins
or insects. Sound sleep and an eye bath
should be enough to cleanse the locus.

Now comes the mental image. In
preparing for my own experiments - a
long fumble which these notes shall
~~be~~ help novices to avoid - I toyed
with the idea of drawing a fairly detailed,
fairly recognizable portrait of myself ~~on~~
on my private blackboard. I see myself



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

in my closet glass as an obese ^{bulk} ~~person~~ with formless features and a sad porcine stare; but my visual imagination is nil, and I am quite unable to ~~thuck~~ ^{stick} Nigel Telling under my eyelid, let alone keeping him there in ~~front~~ a fixed aspect of flesh for any length of time. I then tried various stylizations: a Telling-like doll, a sketchy skeleton or would the letters of my name do? Its recurrent "i"

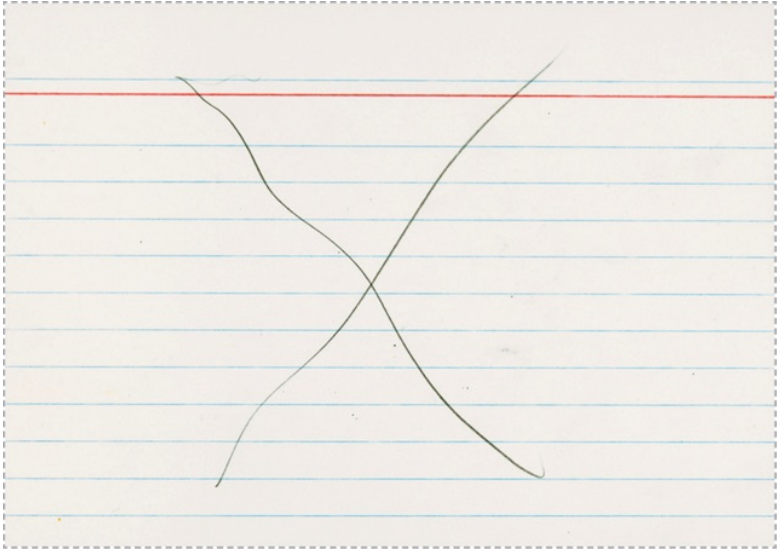


[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

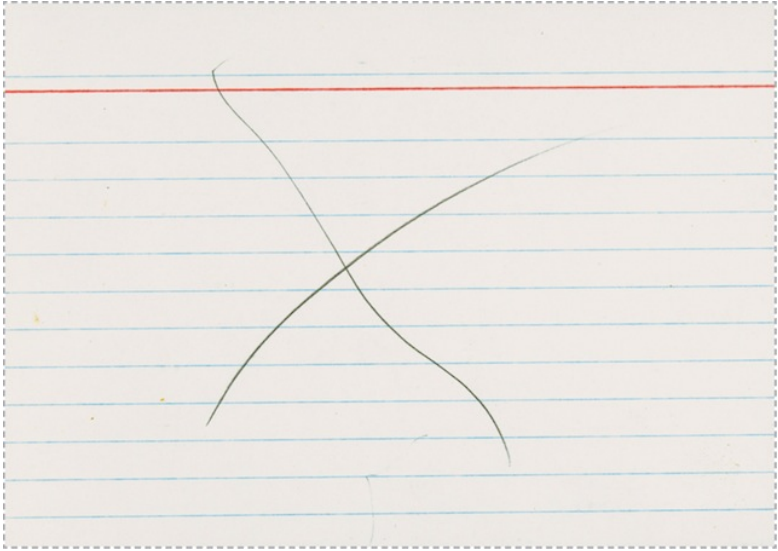
~~coinciding with our favorite pronoun~~

suggested an elegant solution: a simple vertical line across my field of inner vision ~~and~~ ^{at the} could ~~be~~ ^{be} in an instant, and what is more I could mark lightly by transverse ~~lines~~ ^{marks} the three divisions of my physical self: legs, torso, and head.

9

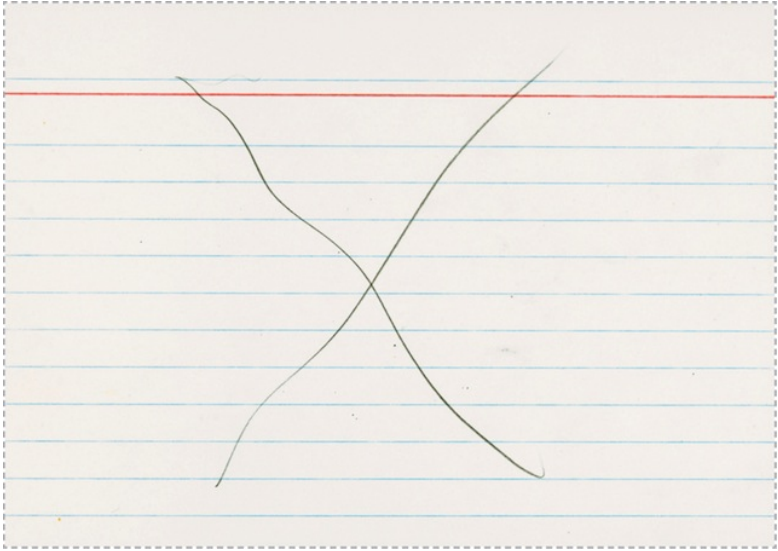


[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



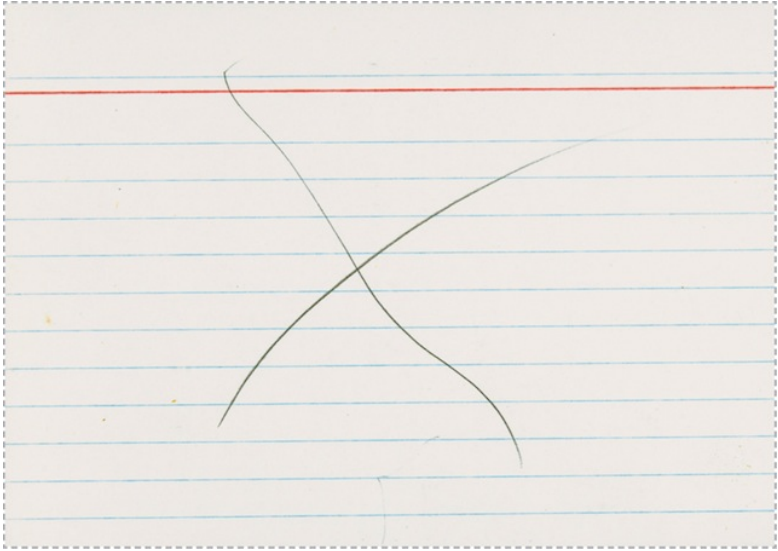
[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

the sandals of childhood were replaced by smart shoes, whose very polish reflected pain and poison. So what a delight it was to amputate my tiny feet! Yes, tiny, yet I always wanted them, rolly polly dandy that I am, to seem even smaller. The daytime footwear ^(ch.) always hurt, always hurt. ~~now~~ I waddled home from work and replaced the agony of my dapper oxfords by the comfort of old bed slippers. This act of mercy inevitably drew from me a voluptuous



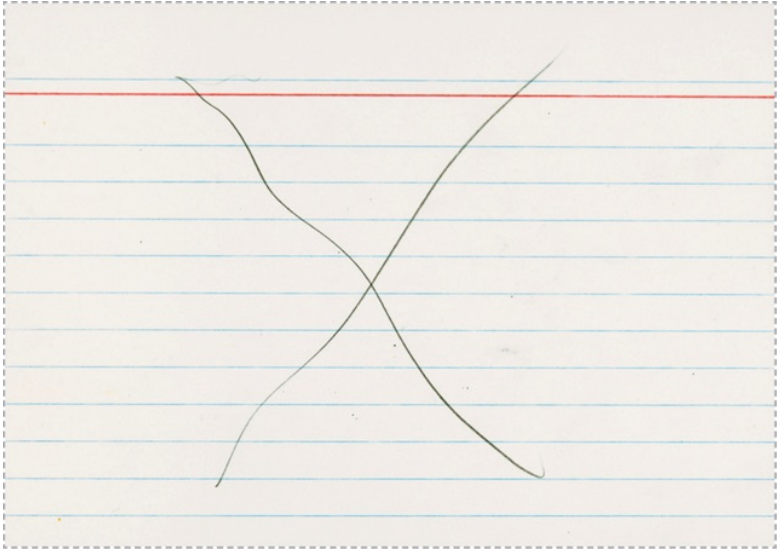
[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

sigh which my wife, whenever I imprudently
let her hear it, denounced as vulgar,
disgusting, obscene. Because she was a
cruel lady or because she thought I
might be doing on purpose to irritate her,
she once ~~or~~ hid my slippers, hid them
furthermore in separate spot as one does
with delicate siblings in ~~nutritional~~ orphanages,
especially on chilly nights, but I forthwith
went out and bought twenty pairs of soft, soft
Carpetoes while hiding my tear-staining face
under a Father Christmas mask, which frightened the shopgirls.



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

¶ For a moment I wondered with some apprehension if the deletion of my procreative system might produce nothing much more than a magnified orgasm. I was relieved to discover that the process continued ~~the~~ sweet death's ineffable sensation which had nothing in common with ejaculations or sneezes. The three or four times that I reached that stage I forced myself to restore the lower half of my white "I" on my mental blackboard and thus wriggle out of my perilous trance. ¶

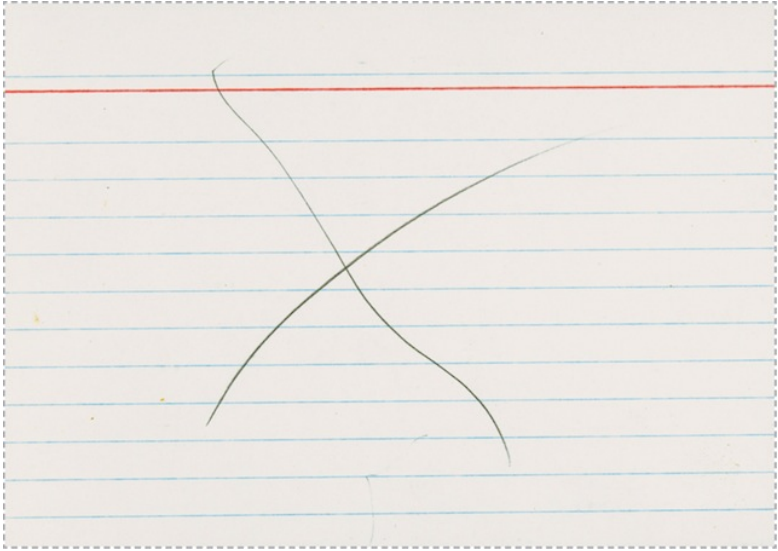


[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

J, Philip Wilder-

29

Lecturer in Experimental Psychology, University
of Ganglia
I ~~was~~ suffered for ^{the last} seventeen years from
a humiliating stomach ailment which
seriously limited the possibilities of companionship
in small dining rooms

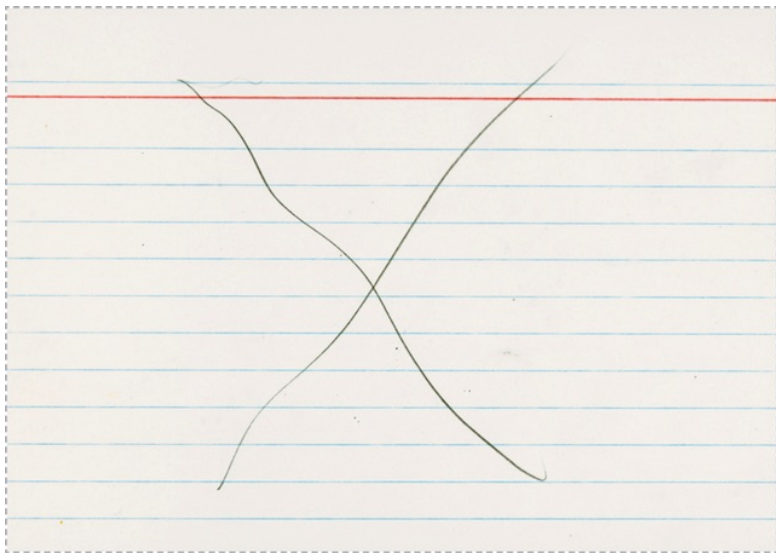


[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

210

which) I loathe my belly, that treasureful of bowels,
(I have to carry around, and everything connected
with it - the wrong food, heartburn, consti-
pation's leaden load, or else indigestion
with a ^{first instalment of} hot torrent of filth pouring out of
me in a public toilet three minutes
before a punctual engagement.

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

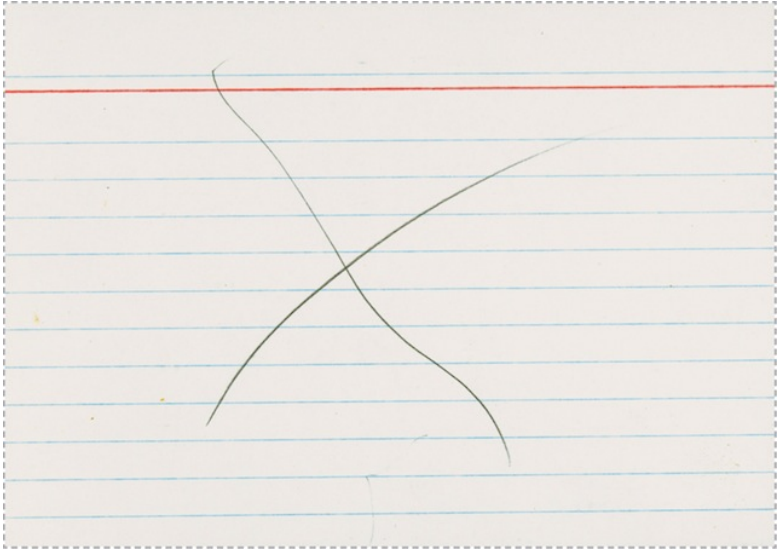


[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

~~Heart~~ (21)
Heart
[or horns]

There is, there was, only one girl in my life,
an object of terror and tenderness, an object,
too, of universal compassion on the part
of millions who read about her in her
lover's books. I say "girl" and not woman,
not wife nor wench. If I were writing
in my first language I would have said "fille".
A sidewalk cafe, a summer-striped Sunday:
il regardait passer les filles - that sense,
not professional whores, not necessarily
well-to-do tourists but "fille" as a translation
of "girl" which I now retranslate:

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

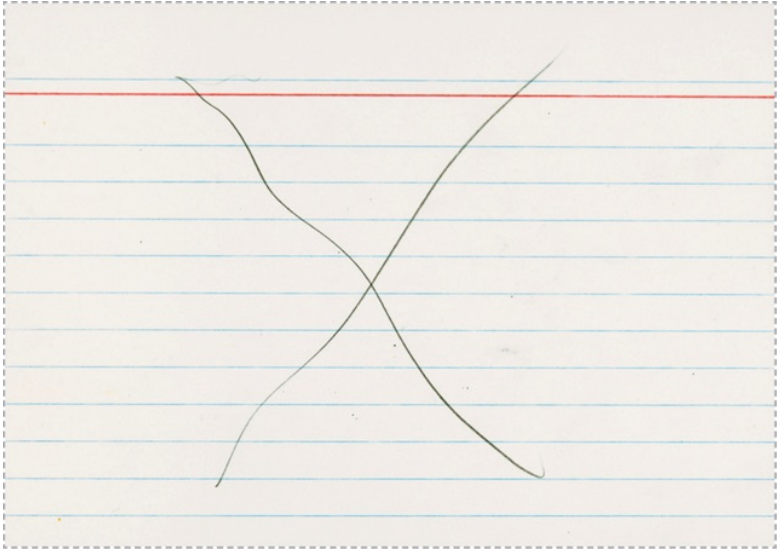


[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

from heel to hip, then the
trunk, then the head

~~A~~ when nothing was
left but a grotesque
bust and wide staring eyes

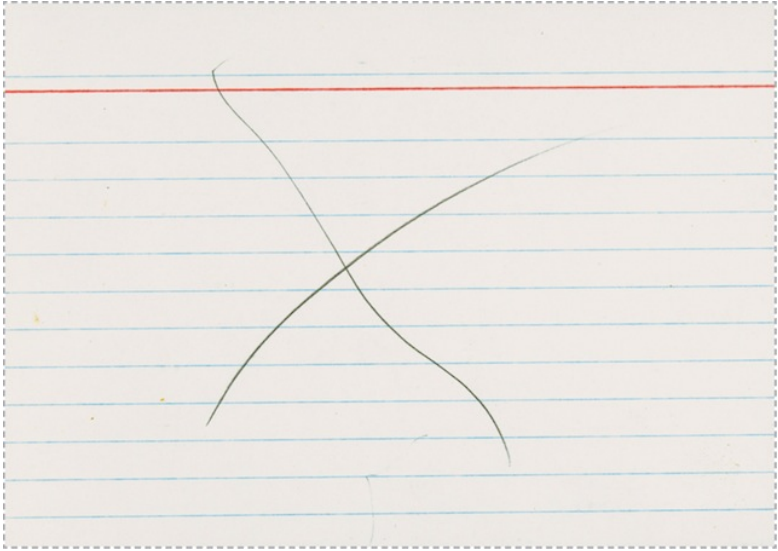
[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Sophrosyne, a platonic term for ideal
self-control stemming from one's
rational core.

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

¶ I was enjoying a petit-bevree with
my ^{noon time} ~~noon time~~ tea when the droll configuration
of that particular Bisquit's margins set
into motion a train of thought that may
have occurred to the reader even before
it occurred to me. He knows already
how much I disliked my toes. An
ingrown nail on one foot and a
corn on the other were now pestering
me. Would it not be a brilliant move, I thought, ~~to~~
to get rid of my toes by sacrificing
them to an experiment that only



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

cowardness kept postponing? I had always restored, on my mental blackboard, the symbols of deleted organs before backing out of my trance. Scientific curiosity and plain logic demanded I prove to myself that if I left the flawed line alone, it ^{then} would be reflected in the condition of this or that part of my body. I dipped a last ~~poit-beurre~~ in my tea, swallowed the sweet mush and resolutely ~~set~~ started to work on my wretched flesh.



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Will (S)

¶ Testing a discovery and finding it correct can be a great satisfaction but it can be also a great shock mixed with all the torments of rivalry and ignoble envy. I know at least two such rivals of mine ~~who will~~ ^{you, Curson, and you, Crookson} clap their claws like crabs ~~scuttling~~ in boiling water. Now when it is the discoverer himself who ~~re-examines~~ tests his discovery and finds that it works he will feel a torrent of pride and purity that will cause him

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

~~So the old man is actually to~~
 pity Prof. Carson and pet Dr. Croxson
 (whom I see Mr West has demolished in a
 recent paper). We are above petty revenge.

¶ On a hot Sunday afternoon, in
 my empty house - Flora and Cora being
 somewhere in bed with their boy friends -
 I started the official test. The fine
 base of my chalk white "I" was erased and
 left erased when I decided to break
 my hypnotrance. The extermination of
 my ten toes had been accompanied with



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Wild 

the usual voluptu. I was lying on a mattress in my bath, with the strong beam of my sharing lamp ~~trained~~ ^{when I opened my eyes,} on my feet. I saw at once that my toes were intact.

After ~~the~~ swallowing my disappointment I scrambled out of the tub, landed on the tiled floor and fell on my face. To my intense joy I could not stand properly because my ten toes were in a state of indescribable numbness, they looked all right, though perhaps a



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Wild



a little paler than usual, but all sensation
had been slashed away by a razor of ice.
I palpated warily the hallux and the four
other digits of my right foot, then of my
left one and all was rubber and rot.
The immediate setting-in of decay was especially
sensationally. I crept on all-fours into
the adjacent bedroom and with infinite
effort into my bed.

The rest was mere cleaning-up. In
the course of the night I teased off
the shrivelled white flesh and contemned
with utmost delight

before I



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Will



I know my feet smelled despite daily
baths, but this ~~seems~~ was something special

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

That test - though admittedly a trivial affair - confirmed me in the belief that I was working in the right direction and that (unless some hideous wound or excruciating sickness joined the merry pallbearers) the process of dying by auto-dissolution afforded me the greatest ecstasy known to man.



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

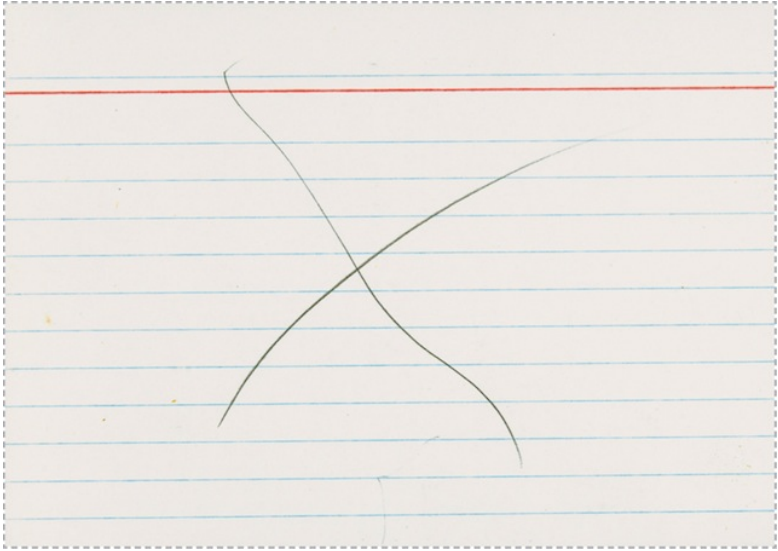
(Tues)

I expected to see at best the length of each foot greatly reduced with its distal edge neatly transformed into the semblance of ^{the} end of a bread loaf without any trace of toes. At worst I was ready to find an anatomical preparation of ten ^{bare} phalanges sticking out of my feet like a skeleton's claws. Actually all I saw was ~~a commensurate~~ the familiar rows of digits.



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

¶ "Install yourself," said the youngish, suntanned, cheerful Dr. Aupert, indicating, openheartedly an armchair at the north rim of his desk, and proceeded to explain the necessity of a surgical intervention. He ~~of~~ showed A.N.D. one of the dark^{grim} x-rays that had been taken of A.N.D.'s rear anatomy. The globular shadow of an adenoma eclipsed the greater part of the whitish bladder. This

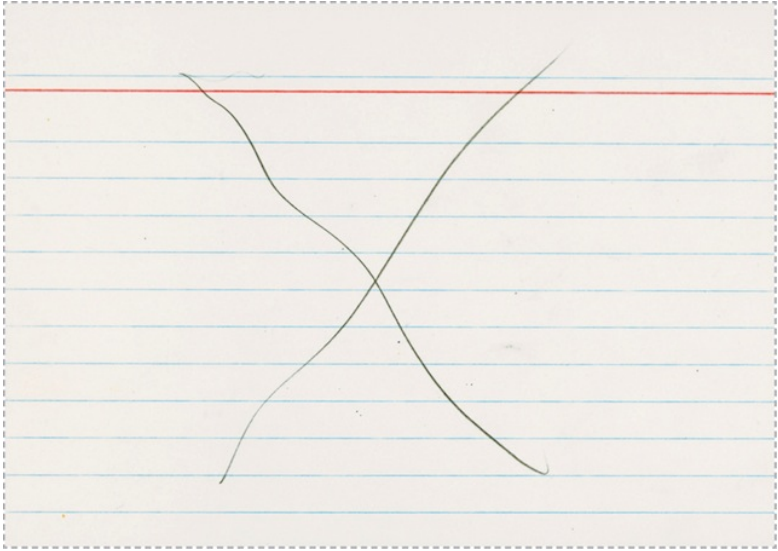


[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

(1)

(2)

~~aggressive~~
benign tumor ~~that~~ had been growing
on the prostate for some fifteen years
and was now as many times its size
the unfortunate gland
~~could not be removed~~
with the great gray perisite clinging
to it could and should be removed ^{at once}
"And if I refuse," said AND
"Then, one of these days,



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

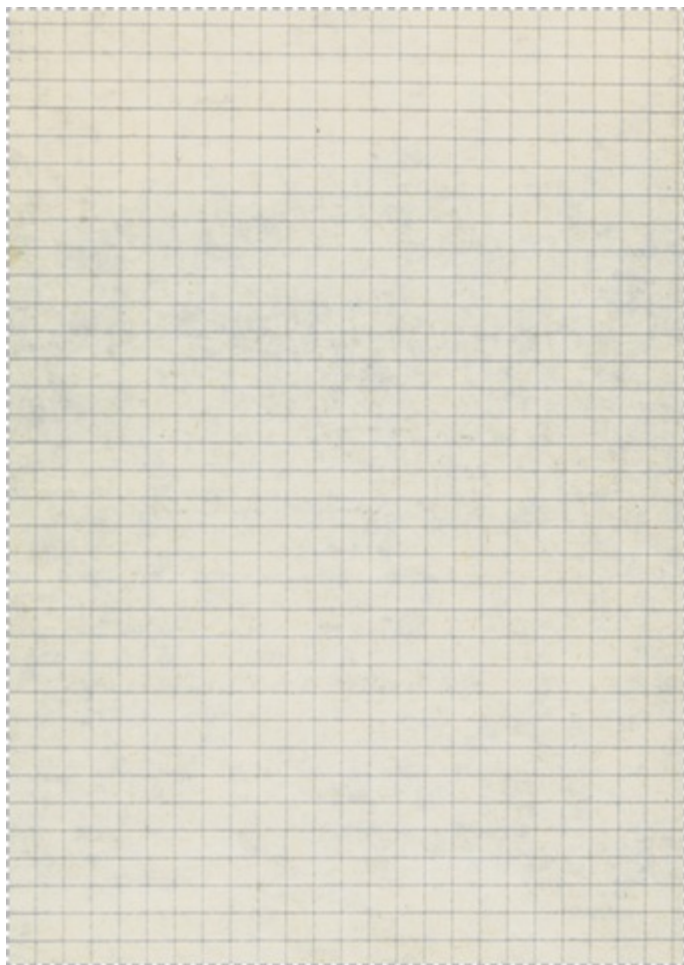
that became
keep it free from
any intervention.
tired eyes.

gargoyles
Such as hypnagogic ~~images~~
~~hallucinations~~ or the
~~entoptic sensations~~

a breeding birth of
entoptic ^{swarms} ~~floaters~~

a vertical line chalked against
a ~~the~~ plumby darkness
or a one's collection
of coin or insects

a magnifier or a
little skeleton but
that demanded



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

my special

In this self-hypnotic state there can be no question of getting out of touch with oneself and floating in a normal sleep (unless you are very tired at the start)

To break the trance all you do is to restore in ~~details~~ ^{even} chalk-bright details the simple picture of yourself ^{a skeletal skeleton} on your mental blackboard. One should remember, however, that the divine delight in destroying, say one's breastbone should not be indulged in. Enjoy the destruction but do not linger over your own ruins lest you develop an incurable illness, or die before you are ready to die.

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

the delight of getting under ~~the corner~~
of an ingrown toe nail with sharp scissors
and snipping off the offending corner
and the added ecstasy of finding beneath it
an amber abscess whose blood flows
carrying away the ignoble pain

But with age I could not
bend my knees toward my feet
and was ashamed to present
them to a pedicure.

A blank sheet of lined paper, likely a notepad or a page from a notebook. It features a red horizontal line near the top, creating a margin, and several blue horizontal lines for writing. The paper is set against a white background with a dashed border around it.

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

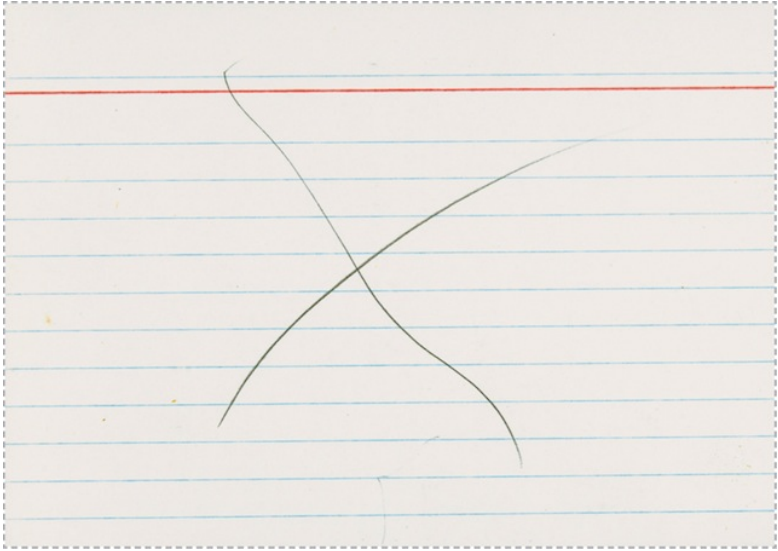
~~the~~
Last Chapter

Revising
of last chapter

¶ [Miss Use, this is the MS. of my last chapter which you will please, type out in three copies - I need the additional one for prepub in Bud- or ~~in some other~~ ~~magazine~~ magazine]

¶ Several years ago, when I was still working at the Horloge Institute of Neurology, a silly female interviewer introduced me in a silly radio series ("Modern Eccentrics") as "a gentle Oriental sage, founder of (insert cards)"

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

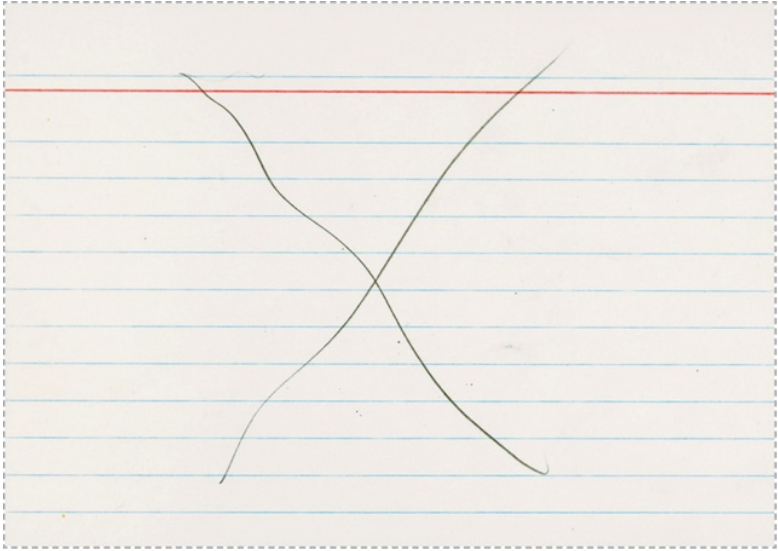


[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

(Penult. End.)

End of penult chapter.

The manuscript in longhand of Wild's last chapter, which at the time of his fatal heart attack, ten blocks away, his typist, Sue-ll, had not had the time to tackle because of ~~the~~ urgent work for another employer was deftly plucked from her hand by that other fellow who finds a place of publication more permanent than Bud or Root.



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

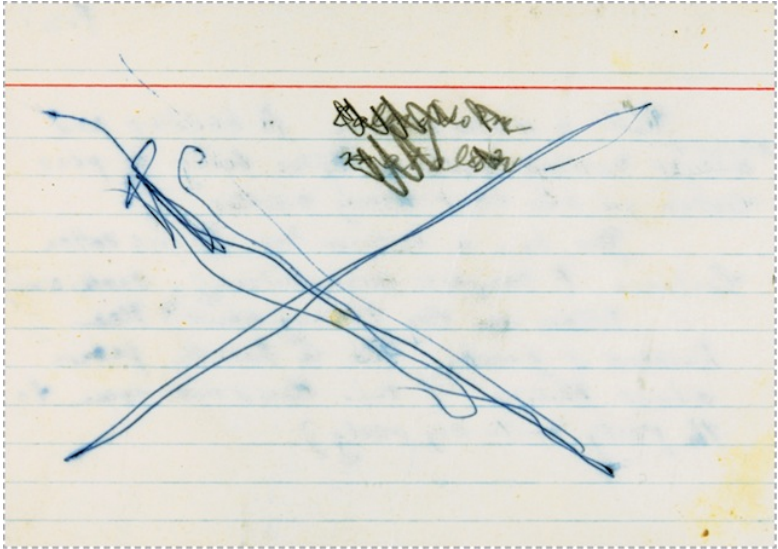
First

(a)

Wall, a writer of sorts. A budding and
already ~~weight~~ ^{weight} getting writer. After being a poor
~~lecturer~~ ^{some of} lecturer in her last dreary castles.

Yes, he's a lecturer too. A rich rotten
Lecturer (complete misunderstanding, another word).

Whom are they talking about? Her
husband I guess. He is horribly ~~frank~~
about Philipp. (who could not come to
the party. - to any party)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

First
6

~~head~~ ^{brain} - when the ray projected by me
reaches the lake of Dante's ventricle ~~on~~
the Island of Reel in the brain

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Wilds: I do not believe that ~~that~~ the spinal cord is the only or even main conductor of the extravagant messages that reach my brain. I have to find out more about that - about the strange impressions here of others: ~~there~~ ^{there} ~~some~~ ^{some} underpath, so to speak, along which the comrades of my will power are passed to and ~~from~~ ^{pass} along the shadow of nerves, rather along the nerves proper.



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

The philgraph~~er~~ was setting up

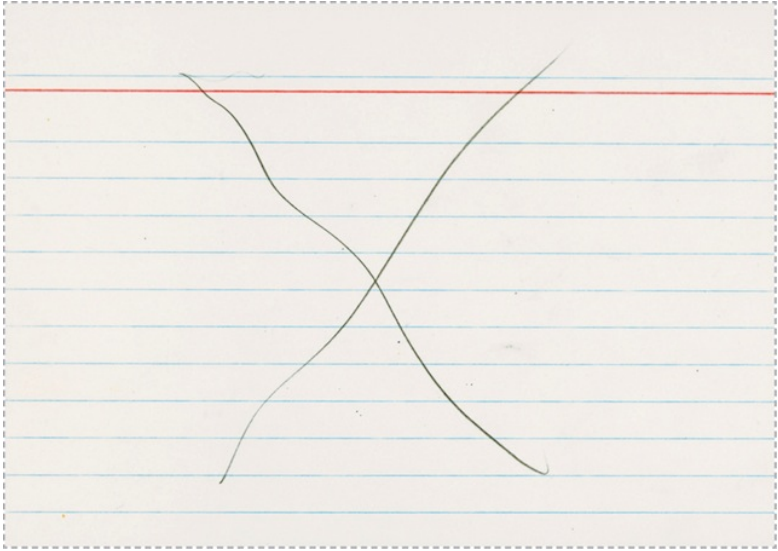
I always know she is cheating on me
with a new boy friend whenever she visits
my bleak bedroom more often than once
a month (which is the average since I turned
sixty)

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[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

T
100
first
e

The only way he could possess her was
in the most position of copulation:
he reclining on cushions, she sitting in
the fauteuil of his flesh with her back to
him. The procedure - a few bounces
over very small humps - meant nothing to her.
She looked at the snow-scapes on the
footboard of the bed -
at the cushions
; and he holding her in front of him like a
child being given a sleigh ride down a

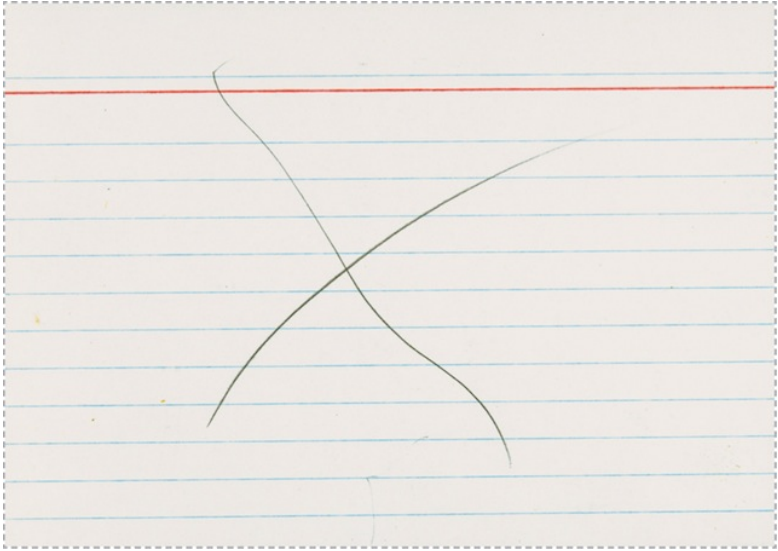


[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

II,

~~fallen~~ short slope by a kind stranger,
he saw her ^{face} back, her
hip between his hands.

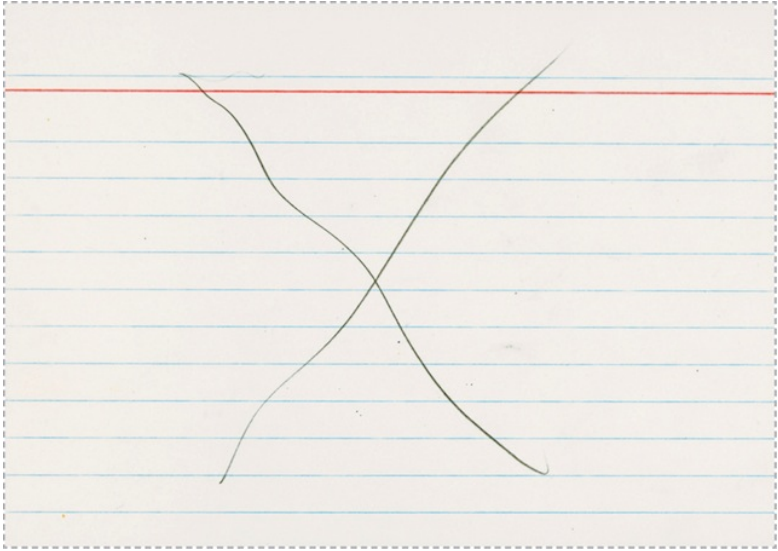
Like toads or tortoises neither saw each
other's faces See as many



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

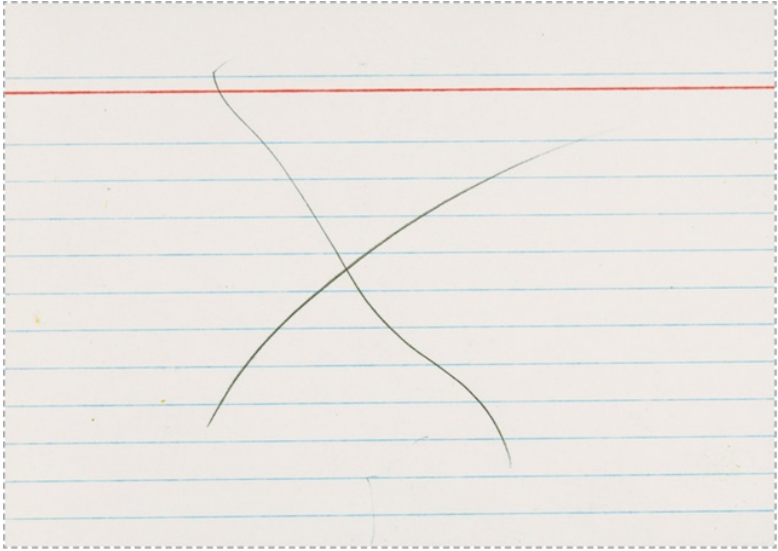
my sexual life is virtually over but —

I saw you again, Aurora Lee, whom as a youth I had pursued with hopeless desire at high-school balls — and whom I ^{have} cornered now fifty years later, on a terrace of my dream. Your painted pout and cold gaze were, come to think of it, very like the official lips and eyes of Flora, my wayward wife, and your flimsy frock of black silk might have come from her recent wardrobe. You turned away, but could not escape, trapped



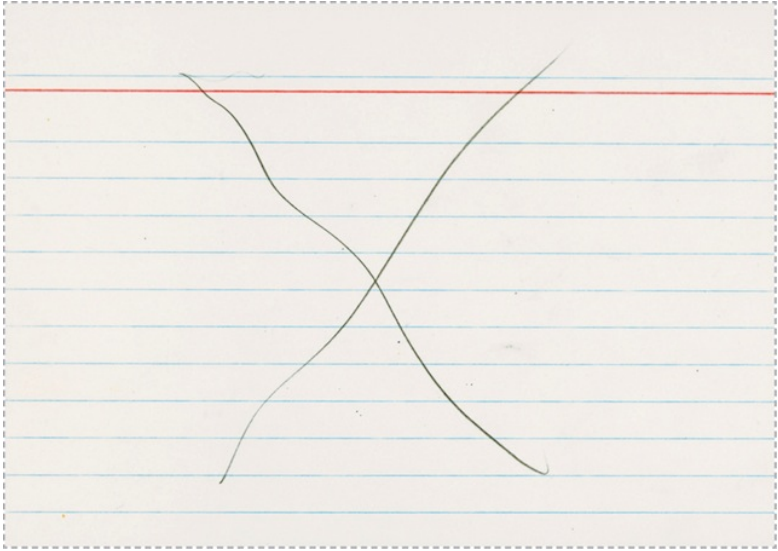
[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

as you were among the
close-set columns of moonlight and I
lifted the hem of your dress - something I ~~was~~
never had done in the past - and stroked,
moulded, pinched ever so softly your pale
prominent nates, while you stood perfectly still
as if considering new possibilities of
power and pleasure and interior decoration.
At the height of your guarded ecstasy I thrust
my cupped hand ^{from behind} between your consenting
thighs and felt the ~~frankness~~
sweat-stuck folds of a long scrotum and



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

then, further in front, the droop of a short member. Speaking as ^{an} authority on dreams, I wish to add that this was no homosexual manifestation but a splendid example of terminal gynandzism. Young Aurora Lee (who was to be axed and chopped up at seventeen by an idiot lover, all glasses and beard) and half-impotent old Wild formed for a moment one creature. But quite apart from all that, in a more

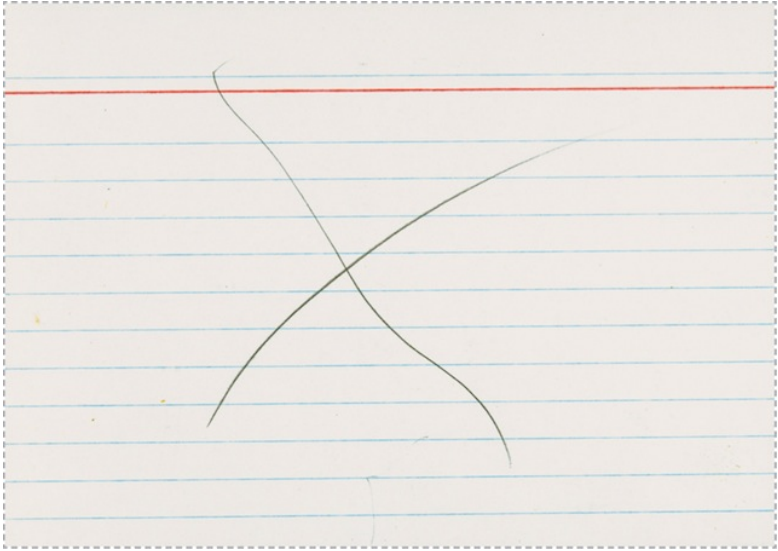


[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Aurora 14

disgusting and delicious sense, her little bottom, so smooth, so moonlit, a replica, in fact, of her twin brother's charms, ~~sampled~~ sampled rather brutally on my last night at boarding school; ~~it~~ remained inset in the medalion of every following day.

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



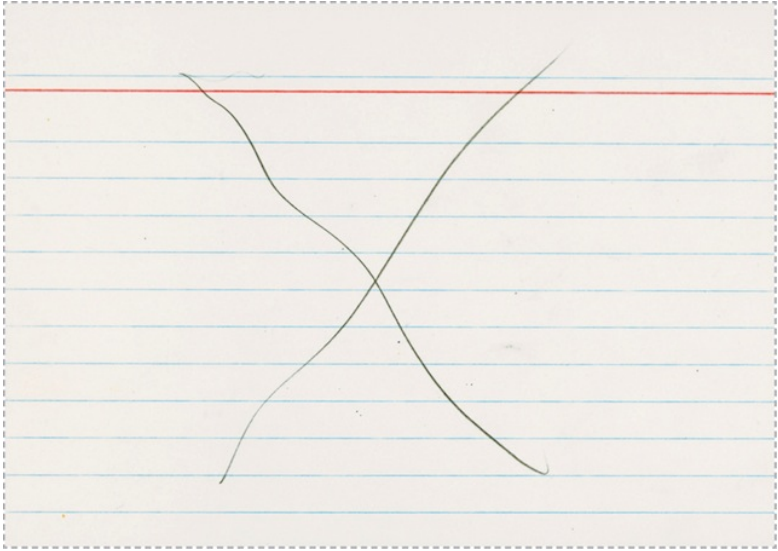
[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

(Muscul.)

"willpower", ~~if~~ absolute
self domination.

Electroencephalographic recordings
of the hypnotic "sleep" are very similar
to those of the waking state and quite
different from those of ~~the~~ normal sleep.
Yet there are certain minute details
about the patterns of the "trance" and
~~these~~ which, are of extraordinary interest
and place it specifically apart from
sleeping and the waking state.

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

self-extinction
Self-immolation, -tor

Wied's
note -

Three card at least
of this stuff

As I destroyed my throat, I also destroyed
and the
and the laughing people in theaters with a
not longer visible stage or screen, and
the
and the ~~ce~~ in the cemetery
of the asymmetrical heart

autosuggestion, autopsychist
autosuggestive

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

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[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

A process of self-obliteration conducted by an effort of ^{the} will. ~~The~~ pleasure, bordering on almost unbearable ecstasy, comes from feeling the will working at a ~~completely~~ ^{unseen} new task: an act of destruction which develops paradoxically an element of creativeness, in the totally new application of totally free will. Learning to use the vigor of the body for the purpose of ~~action~~ ^{own's behavior}. Standing vitality on its head.



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

OK)

Nirvana blowing out, [extinguishing],
extinction, disappearance the Buddhist
theology extinction... and absorption into
the Supreme spirit.

[Nirvanic embrace of Brahma]

bonzo = Buddhist monk

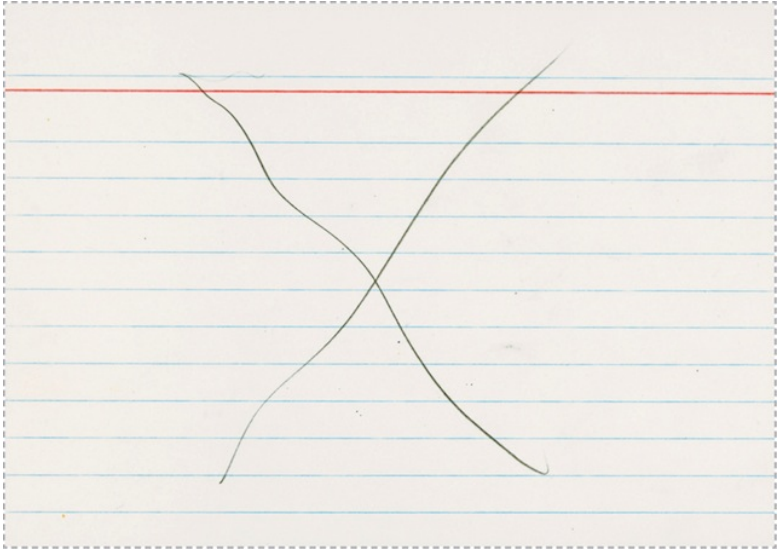
bonzery, bonzeries

the doctrine of Buddhist incarnation,
Brahmahood = absorption into the divine
essence.

~~Brahmism~~

[all this postulates a supreme god]

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Buddhism ~~beat~~

"individual existence"

Nirvana = "extinction of the self"

"release from the cycle of reincarnations"

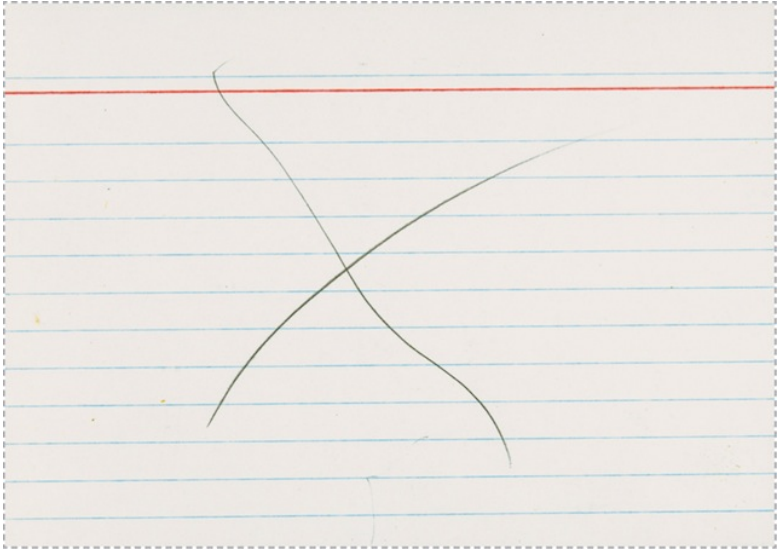
"ceases with Brahma" (Hinduism)

attained through the suppression of individual existence.

Buddhism: Beatic spiritual condition

The religious sublimity and ~~ecstasy~~ mysticism of Oriental wisdom

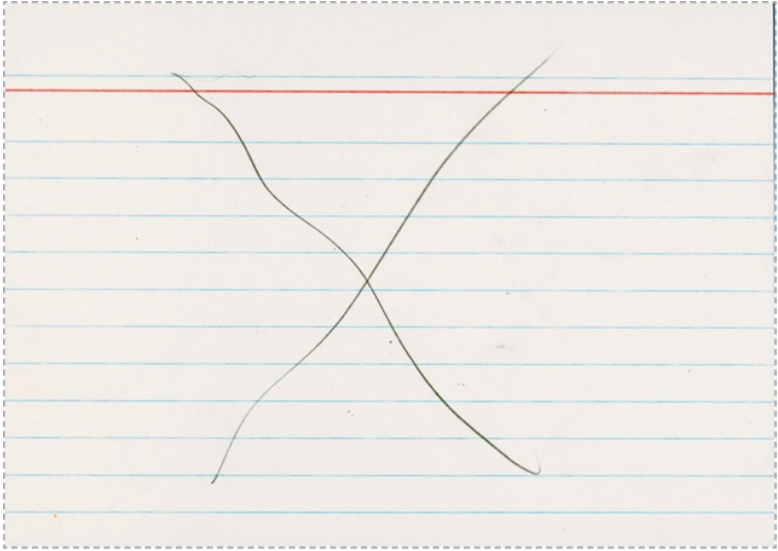
The minor poetry of mystical myths



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Wild A

The novel Laura was sent to me by the painter Rawitch, a rejected admirer of my wife, of whom he did an exquisite oil a few years ago. The way I was led by delicate clues and ghostly nudges to the exhibition where "Lady with Fan" was sold to me by his girl friend, a sniggering tart with gilt fingernails, is a separate anecdote in the anthology of humiliation to which, since my marriage, I have been a constant contributor. As to the book,

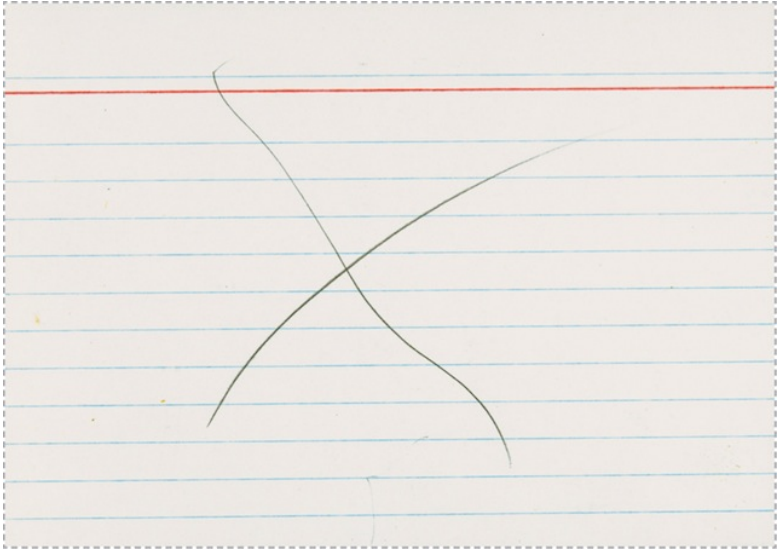


[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

(Wild R)

which
a bestseller, & the blurb described it as
"a roman à clef with the clef lost for
ever", the demonic hands of one of
my servants, the Velvet Valet - as
Flora called him, kept slipping it
into my visual field until I
opened the damned thing and discovered
it to be a maddening masterpiece.

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

¶¶¶ Winny Carr waiting for her train on the station platform of Sex, a delightful Swiss resort famed for its crimson plums noticed her old friend Flora on a bench near the bookstall ^{with a} paperback in her lap. This was the soft cover copy of Laura issued virtually at the same time as its ~~first~~ ~~copy~~ much stouter and comelier ~~version~~ ~~hardback edition~~ ~~in~~ addition hardback edition. She had just bought it at the station bookstall,



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

(23)

show you your wonderful death. Damn,
here's my train. Are ~~you~~ we going together?

"I'm not going anywhere. I'm
expecting somebody. Nothing very
exciting. Please, let me have my book."

"Oh, but I simply must
find that ^{parade} ~~chapter~~ for you. It's not
quite at the end. You'll scream
with laughter. It's the craziest
death in the world."

"You'll miss your train" said Flora



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Philip Wild spent most of the afternoon in the shade of a marbrosa tree (that he vaguely mistook for an opulent ~~tree~~ tropical race of the birch) sipping tea with lemon and ~~sporadically~~ making ~~embryonic notes~~ ~~embryonic notes~~ with a diminutive pencil attached to a diminutive agenda-book which seemed to melt into his broad moist palm where it would spread in sporadic crucifixions. He sat with widespread



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

legs to accomodate his enormous stomach and now and then checked or made in midthought half a movement to check the fly buttons of his old fashioned white trousers. There was also the recurrent search for his pencil sharpener, which he absently put into a different pocket every time after use. Otherwise, between all those ~~small~~ movements, he sat perfectly still, like a meditative idol. Flora would be often presentolling in a deck chair,



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

enclosing his chair in a ^{her progression} of stream magazine) C
moving it from time to time circling as it
were around her husband, ^{and} ^{as she sought} in quest of
an even denser shade than the one
sheltering him. The urge to expose,
the maximum of naked flesh permitted by
fashion was combined in her strange little
mind with a ^{kind of} east touch of tan
defiling her ivory skin.

~~The next morning she went down to the beach and lay on the sand under a palm tree.~~



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Eric's notes

To all contraceptive precautions, and indeed
to orgasms at their safest and deepest, ~~and~~
I much preferred - madly preferred -
finishing off at my ease against
the softest part of her thigh. This
predilection might have ~~been~~
been due to the unforgettable impact
of my ~~comp~~ ^{comp} with school mates
of different but erotically identical,
sexes

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



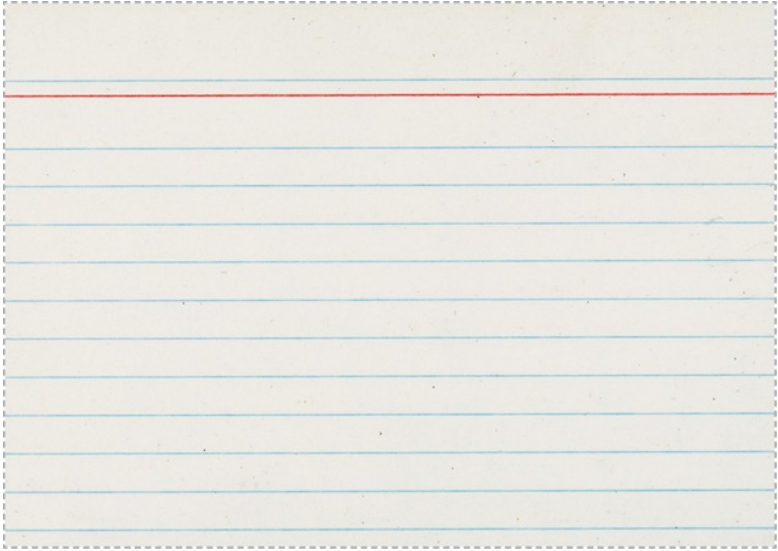
[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

he for had needed
and that he would come to
stay for at least a
week every other month.

Thank you for a theme
beginning poem and
poem with most and the

as a gift to you

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

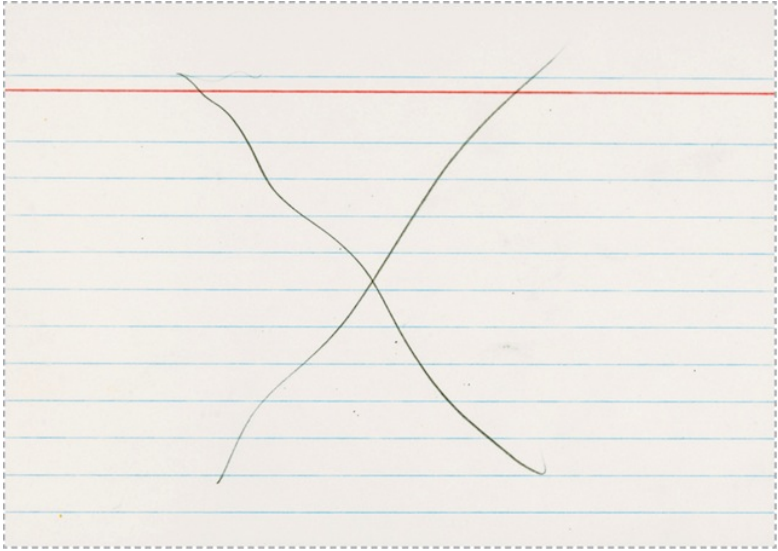


[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

X

After a three-year separation (distant war, regular exchange of tender letters) we met again. Things still married to that hog she kept away from home and at the moment sojourned at a central European resort in eccentric solitude. We met in a splendid park that she praised with exaggerated warmth - picturesque trees, blooming meadows - and in a secluded part of it an ancient "^{Zotunda} ~~parthenon~~" with pictures and much " where ~~was~~

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

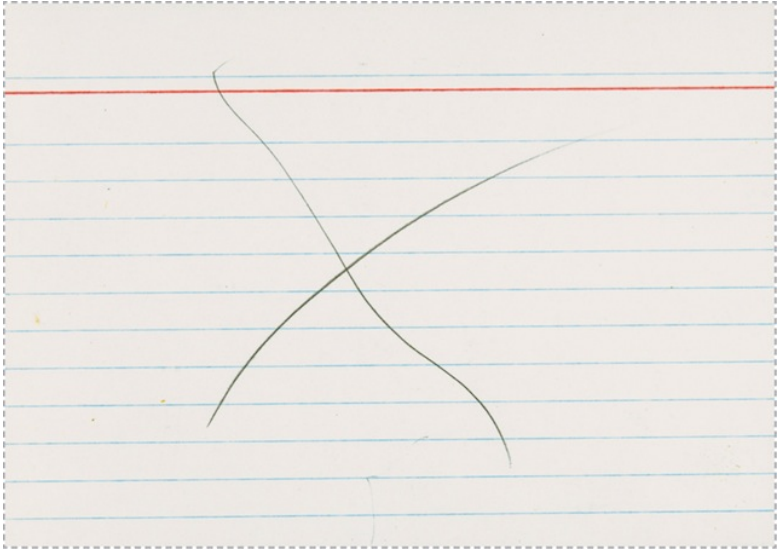


[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

XX

we simply had to stop for a rest and a
bite - the sisters, I mean ^{she said} the attendant
there - served iced coffee and cherry
tart of quite special quality - and
as she spoke I suddenly began to
realise with a sense of utter depression
and embarrassment that the "par-ellie"
was ~~the place~~ the celebrated Green Chapel
of St Esmalda and that she was brimming with religious
afforce and yet miserably ^{desperately} fearful, despite
bright smiles and ~~unair~~ ^{unair} ~~enough~~ of my
insulting here by some mocking remark. |

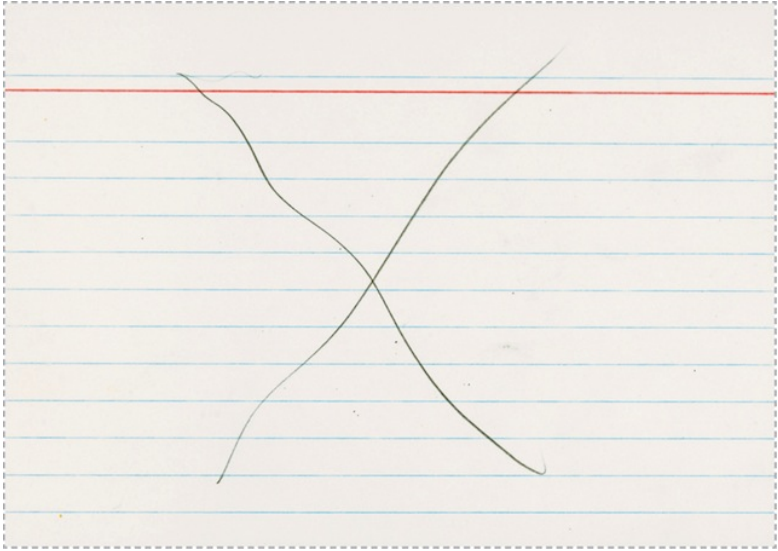
[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

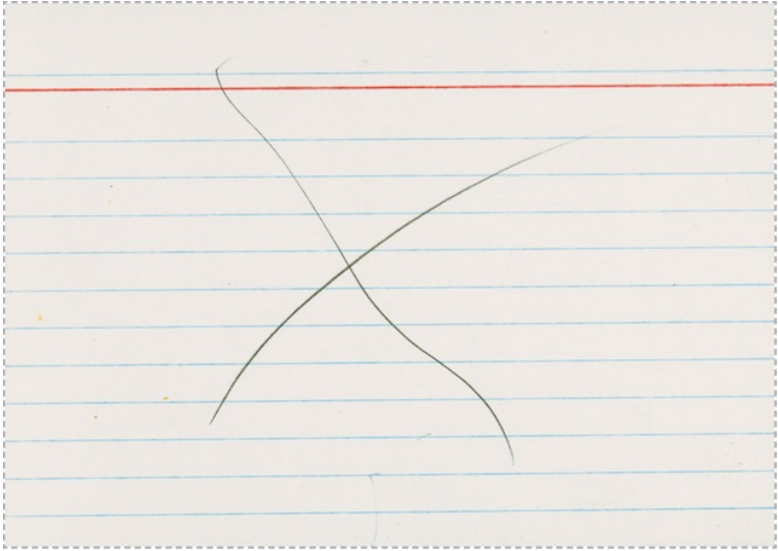
The wall did not go up to the ceiling, it stopped at the
magenta horizon of its painted verge, where the aerosol
slope of the white washed ceiling used to begin.

4 I hit upon the art of theaping away ~~in~~
my body, my beingness, ~~and~~ mind itself.
To think away thought — luxurious suicide,
delicious dissolution! Dissolution, in
fact, is a marvelously apt term here,
for 'as you sit relaxed in this
~~very~~ comfortable chair (narrator's studying
it's armrests) and start destroying
yourself ~~gradually~~, the first thing you
feel is a mounting melting, from
the feet upward.



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

In experimenting on oneself in order to pick out the sweetest death, one cannot, obviously, set a part of one's body on fire or drain it of blood or subject it to any other drastic operation, for the simple reason that these are one-way treatments; ~~and~~ there is no resurrecting the organ one has destroyed. It is the ability to stop the experiment and return intact from the perilous journey that makes all the difference, once ~~mastering~~ its mysterious technique



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

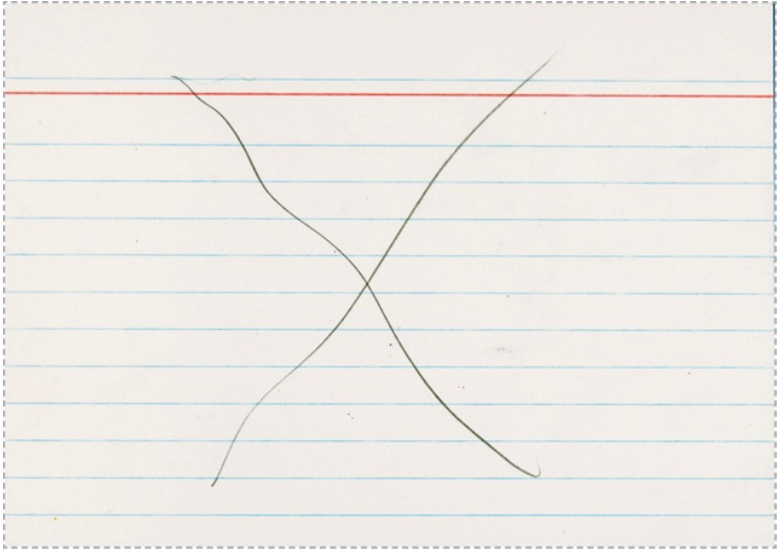
has been mastered by the student of self-annihilation. From the preceding chapters and the footnotes to them, he has learned, I hope, how to put himself into neutral, i.e. into a harmless trance and how to get out of it by a resolute wrench of the watchful will. What cannot be taught is the specific method of dissolving one's body, or at least part of one's body, while tranced. A deep probe of one's darkest self, the unraveling of subjective associations, may suddenly

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[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

lead to the shadow of a clue and then to the clue itself. The only help I can provide is not even paradigmatic. For all I know, the way I found to woo death may be quite atypical; yet the story has to be told for the sake of its strange logic.

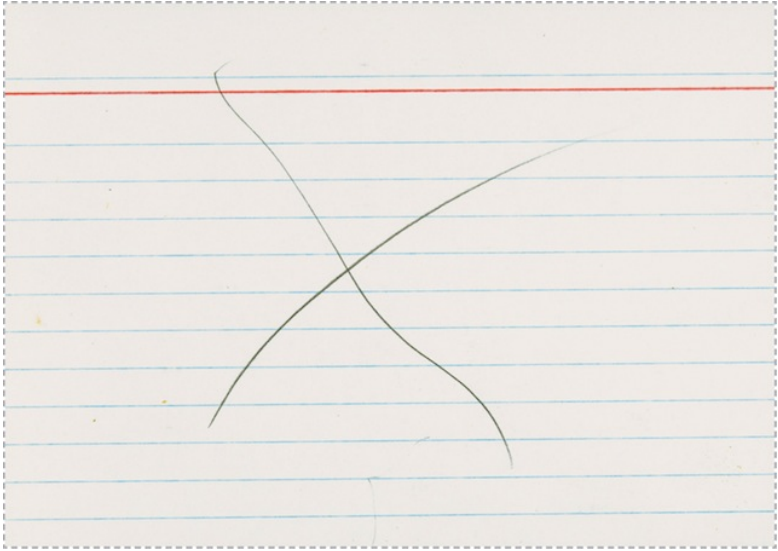
In a recurrent dream of my childhood I used to see a smudge on the wallpaper or on a whitewashed door, a nasty smudge that started to come alive,



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

2 four

turning into a crustacean like monster. As its appendages began to move, a thrill of foolish horror shook me awake; but the same night or the next I would be again facing idly some wall or screen on which a spot of dirt would attract the naive sleeper's attention by starting to grow and ~~begin~~ make groping and clasping gestures - and again I managed to wake up before its bloated bulk got unstuck from the wall. But one night

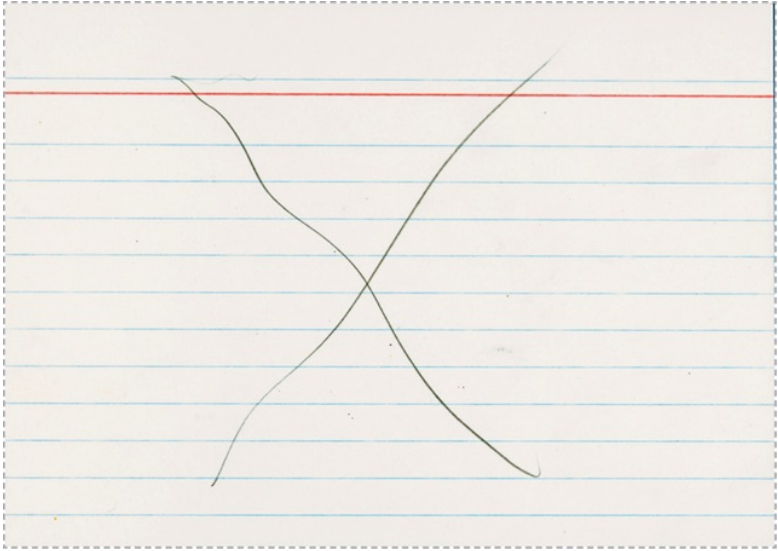


[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

D. five

when some trick of position, some dimple
of pillow, some fold of bedclothes made
me feel brighter and braver than usual,
I let the smudge start its evolution
and, drawing on an ^{imagined} mitten, I simply
rubbed out the beast. Three or four times
it appeared again in my dreams but
now I welcomed its growing shape and
gleefully erased it. Finally it gave up
~~bothering me~~ ^{as some day} life will give up ~~at~~
bothering me. ^{day}

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

¶ I have never derived the least joy from my legs. In fact I strongly object to the bipedal condition. The fatter and wiser I grew the more I abominated the task of grappling with ^{corp} drawers, trousers and pyjama pants. Had I been able to bear the stink and stickiness of my own unwashed body I would have slept ~~there~~ ~~with~~ ~~all~~ ~~my~~ ~~clothes~~ ~~on~~ and had ~~a~~ valets—preferably with some experience in the tailoring of corpses—~~go~~ change me, say, once a week. But then,



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Legs (2)

I also loath the ~~proximity~~ ^{proximity} of valets and the vile touch of their hands. The last one I had was at least clean ~~and honest~~ but he regarded the act of dressing his master as a battle of wits, he ~~doing his best~~ ^{he} ~~was not at all successful in trying~~ to turn the wrong outside into the right inside and I undoing his endeavors by 'working my right foot into my left trouser leg. Our complicated exertions, which to an onlooker might



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Legs (3)

have seemed some sort of exotic wrestling match. Would take us from one zoom to another and end by my sitting on the floor, exhausted and hot, with the bottom of my trousers mis-clothing my heaving abdomen.

Finally, in my sixties ^{constant} I found the right person to dress and undress me; an old illusionist who is able to ~~go~~ behind a screen in the guise of a cossack and instantly come out at the other end as



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Legs ¹⁰ (4)

Uncle Sam. He is tasteless and rude, and altogether not a nice person, but he has taught me many a subtle trick such as ~~the~~ folding trousers properly ~~and~~ and I think I shall keep him despite the fantastic wages he ~~asks~~ ~~he~~ asks. The rascal asks.

¶



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Wild remembrance

Every now and then she would turn up for a few moments between trains, between planes, between lovers. My morning sleep would be interrupted by heart-rending sounds — a window opening, a little bustle downstairs, a trunk coming, a trunk going, distant telephone conversations that seemed to be conducted in conspiratorial whispers. If shivering in my nightshirt I dared to waylay her all she said would be "you really ought to lose some weight" or "I hope you transferred that money as I indicated" — and all doors closed again.

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

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[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Notes

the art of self-slaughter

TL5

16.7.76

" Nietzsche argued that the man of pure will ... must recognise that there is an appropriate time to die "

Philip Werten:

The act of suicide may be "criminal" in the same sense that murder is criminal but in my case it is purified and hallowed by ^{the} incredible delight it gives.

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

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[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Wild 8

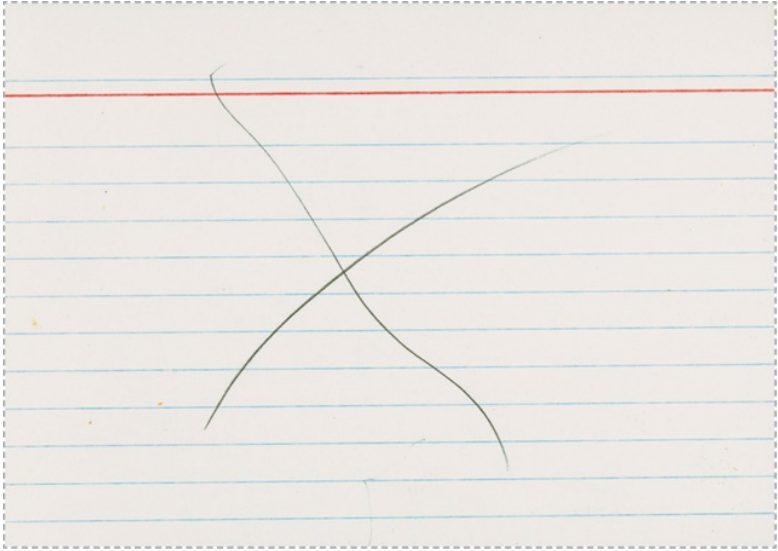
By now I have died up to my navel
some fifty times in less than three
years and my fifty resurrections have
shown that no damage is done to the
organs involved when breaking in time
out of the trance. ~~When~~ ^{As soon as} I started
yesterday to work on my torso, the
act of deletion ~~producing~~ producing an
ecstasy superior to anything experienced
before; yet I noticed that the ecstasy
was accompanied by a new feeling of
anxiety and even panic. more

[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

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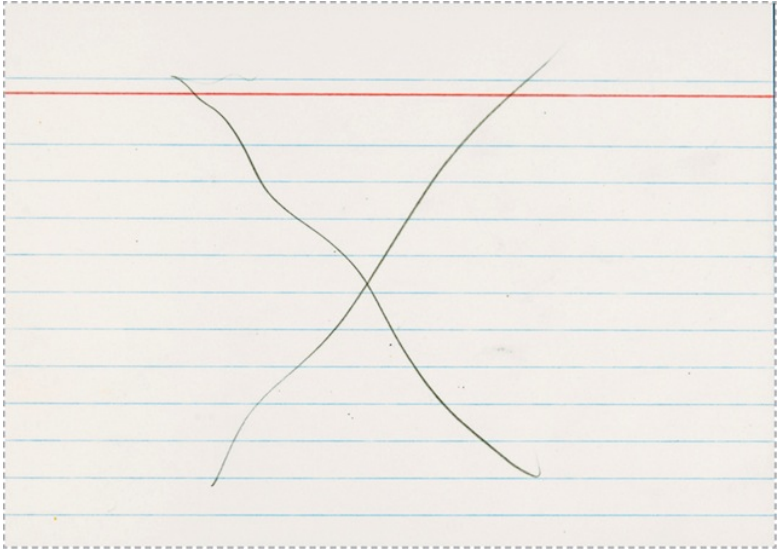
[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

¶ How curious to recall the trouble I had in finding an adequate spot for my first experiments. There was an old swing hanging from a branch of an old oartree in a corner of the garden. Its ropes looked sturdy enough; ~~also~~ its seat was provided with a comfortable safety bar of the kind inherited nowadays by chair lifts. It had ^{been} much used ~~by~~ ^{years ago by my half sister} ~~my half sister~~, a fat dreamy pigtailed creature, who died before reaching puberty. I now had to take a ladder to it, for the sentimental



[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Celtic ~~rod~~ ^{was lifted} ~~rod~~ ^{human} out of reach
 by the growth of the picturesque
 but completely indifferent tree. I
 had glided with a slight oscillation
 into the initial stage of a particularly
 rich trance when the cordage
 burst and I was hurled, still more
 or less ^{boxed into a ditch} full of brambles
 which ~~which~~ ^{which} ripped off a piece of
 the peacock blue dressing gown I
 happened to be wearing that summer day.



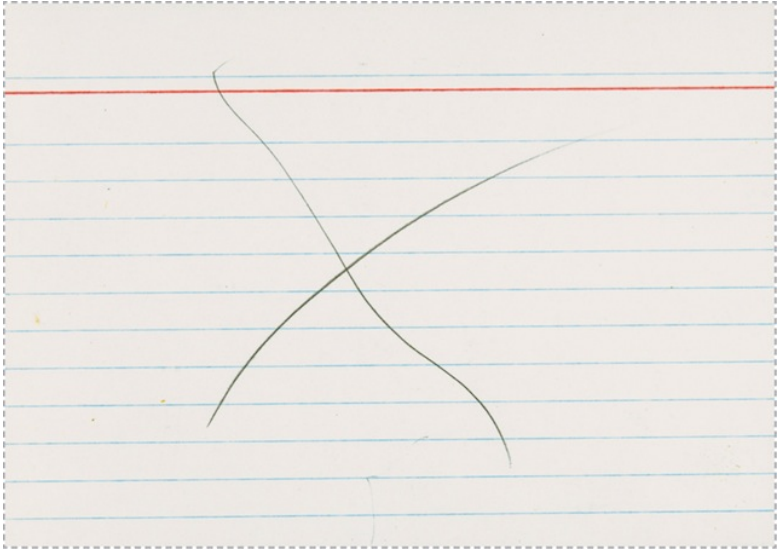
[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

Throwing away oneself
a melting sensation

an enrapturement of delicious dissolution
(what a miraculous appropriate
noun!)

aftereffect of ether, drug
used by anaest.

I have not been much
involving in it.



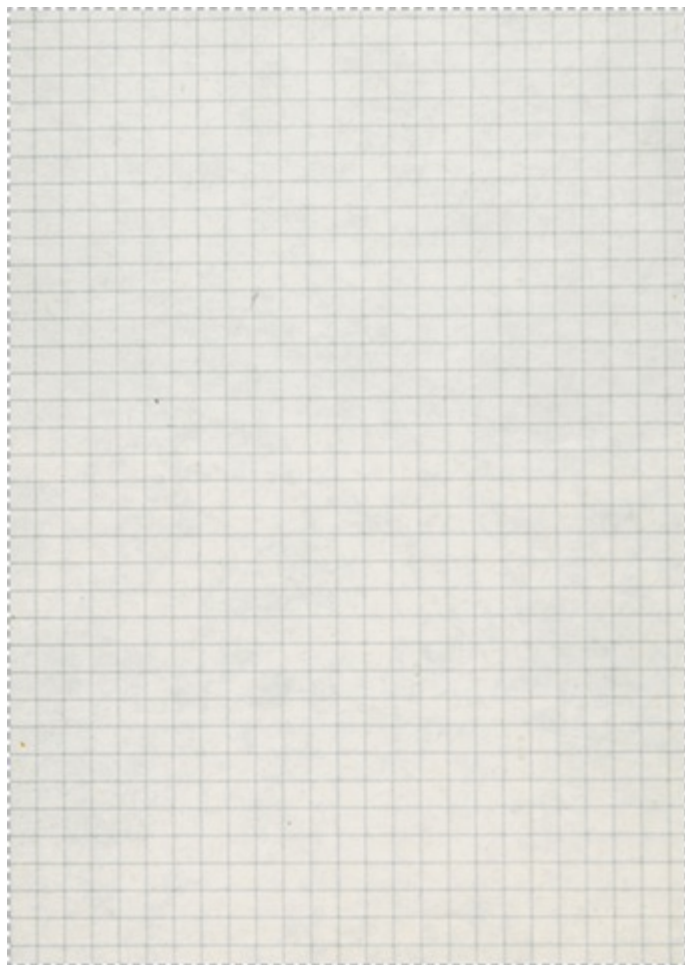
[Return](#) / [Next Card](#)

(efface)
expunge
erase

delete
rub out

~~scribble~~
wipe out
obliterate

[Return](#)



[Return](#)

VLADIMIR NABOKOV

THE ORIGINAL OF LAURA

Vladimir Nabokov was born on April 23, 1899. His family fled to the Crimea in 1917, during the Bolshevik Revolution, then went into exile in Europe. Nabokov studied at Trinity College, Cambridge, earning a degree in French and Russian literature in 1922, and lived in Berlin and Paris for the next two decades, writing prolifically, mainly in Russian, under the pseudonym Sirin. In 1940 he moved to the United States, where he pursued a brilliant literary career (as a poet, novelist, memoirist, critic, and translator) while teaching Russian, creative writing, and literature at Stanford, Wellesley, Cornell, and Harvard. The monumental success of his novel *Lolita* 1955, enabled him to give up teaching and devote himself fully to his writing. In 1961 he moved to Montreux, Switzerland, where he died in 1977. Recognized as one of the master prose stylists of the century in both Russian and English, he translated a number of his original English works—including *Lolita*—into Russian, and collaborated on English translations of his original Russian works.



ALSO BY

VLADIMIR NABOKOV

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The Eye
Glory
Laughter in the Dark
Despair
Invitation to a Beheading
The Gift
The Real Life of Sebastian Knight
Bend Sinister
Lolita
Invitation of a Beheading
Pale Fire
Ada, or Ardor: A Family Chronicle
Transparent Things
Look at the Harlequins!

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DRAMA

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The Song of Igor's Campaign (Anon.)
Eugene Onegin (Alexander Pushkin)

LETTERS

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The Nabokov–Wilson Letters, 1940–1971
Vladimir Nabokov: Selected Letters, 1940–1977

MISCELLANEOUS

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The Annotated Lolita